

Sandiganbayan stops Philcomsat takeover by private shareholders

NBI to take custody of Davao slay witness

By Leila B. Salaverria, Joselle Badilla and Dennis Santos

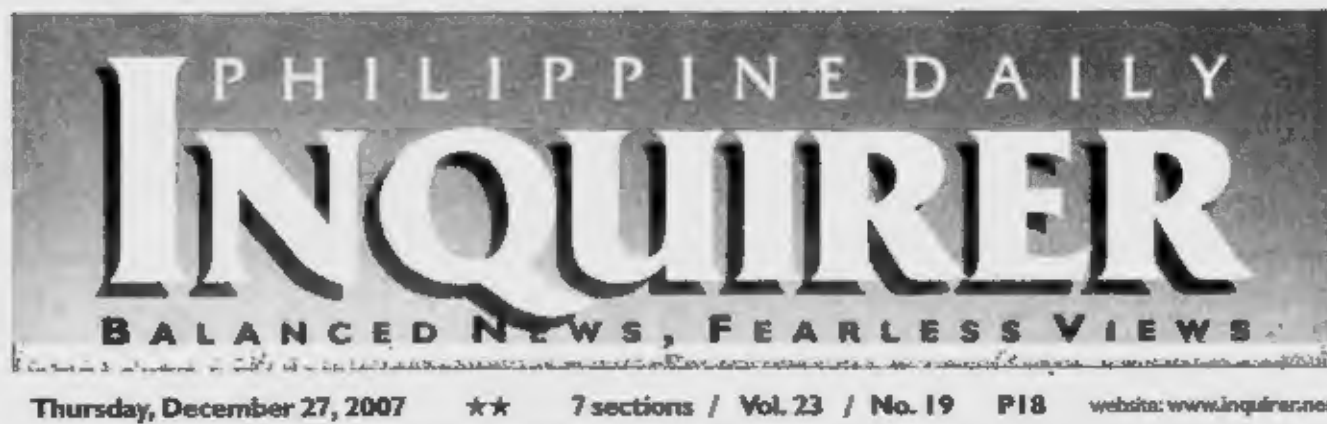
THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION has been directed to take into protective custody the witness to the killing of a radio commentator in Davao City, until he is admitted to the Department of Justice's witness protection program (WPP).

NBI TO/A6

PNP gives P7,000 performance bonus to all policemen

Whistle-blower urges Senate to probe Asean summit deals

SMC expected to seek reconsideration for Sumilao property



Thursday, December 27, 2007 ★★ 7 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 19 P18 website: www.inquirer.net

Joker 'sends' holiday greetings from afterlife

ASHLAND, ORE.—An Oregon man known for his sense of humor gave his friends and family a start recently when they received Christmas cards from him

JOKER/A6



GMA sacks prisons chief

Probers see Abra politics behind blast

By Leoncio Balbin Jr., Frank Cimatu and Artha Kira Paredes
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BANGUED, ABRA—POLICE ARE basking either at an accidental explosion of a stack of firecrackers or political rivalry as possible cause of the blast at the compound of Abra Rep. Cecilia Luna in Barangay Dangdangia on Christmas Day.

Senior Supt. Alexander Pumecha, provincial police director, said Luna was unharmed but her three sons—Lagayan Mayor Jendricks Luna, 37, Dangdangia Barangay Chair Ryan Luna, 31, and Cromwell Luna, 35—were among seven people wounded in the 7 p.m. explosion.

The Luna brothers and four others hurt—PO3 Nathaniel Bermudez, 35; Jodel Datul, 18; Mario Blaza, 34; and Randy Villoria, 37—were playing cards in the garage when the explosion occurred, said Senior Insp. Joseph Paolo Bayongasan, town police chief.

PROBERS/A15



POLICE probers inspect the blast-torn garage of Rep. Cecilia Luna in Bangued, Abra.

Dapat is replaced by former PNP head

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU of Corrections (BuCor), in hot water for convicted child rapist Romeo Jalosjos' unhampered departure from the national penitentiary and flight to his hometown in Zamboanga del Norte before Christmas, has been relieved and replaced.

It was President Macapagal-Arroyo who ordered Oscar Calderon, former chief of the Philippine National Police, to replace Ricardo Dapata as BuCor director, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez told reporters yesterday.

But while Dapata is considered relieved of his post, he is still under investigation in connection with Jalosjos' caper and the leakage to the media of the latter's unofficial release order, Gonzalez said.

Parrying questions, the justice secretary refused to talk about why Dapata was relieved, saying only that it was Ms Arroyo's prerogative to suspend Cabinet officials.

"Upon the instruction of the President, I have installed General Calderon as the acting director of the [BuCor] vice General Dapata," Gonzalez said.

"I think these developments speak for themselves—the fact that General Calderon has made his appearance on the request of the President," he added.

Calderon, a 1973 graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, retired as PNP chief in October and was replaced by Avelino Razon.

He met with Gonzalez at the Department of Justice.

GMA SACKS/A6

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL GAP

Carcasses of telecoms glitches litter RP scene

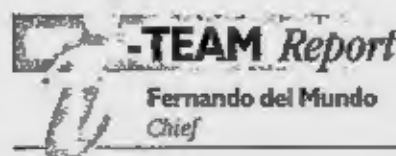
By Allison Lopez and Riza Olchondra

(First of three parts)

THE COURIERS ON BICYCLES SEEM odd in this cyber age, but they do deliver messages.

"Come home immediately. Mama sick," reads one telegram from a remote village that Mario Aquino was carrying in his bag for delivery in Manila on a sunny Tuesday morning.

He is one of over a thousand couriers that the Telecommunications Office (Telof) employs to knock on doors with tidings of great joy—births, wed-



Fernando del Mundo
Chief

dings and well wishes—and sorrow—deaths, sickness and accident.

They also deliver notices of money transfers, employment, census, government seminars and the like.

Arturo Chavez, head of Telof's Liwasang Bonifacio Telegraph in the colonnaded Post Office, says his five messengers deliver 50 telegrams in

Manila daily.

All told, from January to June, the 1,102 stations of Telof, which is under the Department of Transportation and Communications, delivered 1,666,974 assorted telegrams from Aparri to Zamboanga, Telof says.

Messages from remote areas left behind in a time warp are still transmitted using a system of deciphering radio signals developed by Samuel Morse in 1835 or the very high frequency single-side band radio.

Daily telegram deliveries in the city alone used to be in the thousands a

CARCASSES/A15

Automation to bring joy to letter writers

By Jocelyn R. Uy

AT THIS TIME OF THE YEAR, 24-year-old Cindy Ferrer is drawn to a different kind of holiday rush.

On her desk at home, she carefully scribbles on sweet-scented stationery and doodles on Hallmark cards selected with tender love and care from a bookstore to be sent to friends living

AUTOMATION/A15

'07 changed everything for climate change

PARIS—WHEN THE HISTORY OF climate change is written, 2007 will deserve a chapter all to itself.

In just 12 months, global warming has been elevated to the great challenge of our time, a cause for public and celebrities alike, a Nobel-winning issue and a headache for politicians of every rank.

In a vast report, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued its grimmest scientific assessment yet.

Its prose lacked varnish, was riddled with jargon impenetrable to the outsider and admitted to areas of doubt or uncertainty—but this honesty made the findings all the more terrifying.

Its verdict: Global warming is a fact. Humans bear inescapable responsibility for it, thanks to the uncontrolled burning of fossil fuels.

Climate change is already visible, in

'07 CHANGED/A8



VILLAGERS recovering from the 2004 tsunami and an elephant head for the temple in a ritual to thank their pagan gods in Hikkaduwa, Sri Lanka.

REUTERS



A 9.3-magnitude earthquake on December 26, 2004 set off a series of tsunamis several metres high that tore across the Indian Ocean, killing more than 220,000 people

Tsunami survivors await new page

CALANG, INDONESIA—SURVIVORS prayed at mass graves and mosques on Wednesday to mark the third anniversary of the Asian tsunami, while warning sirens sent hundreds fleeing beaches during a drill to test an alert network established since the disaster.

The giant waves on Dec. 26, 2004, spawned by the mightiest earthquake in 40 years, killed around 230,000 people in 12 Indian Ocean nations, just under half of them in the Indonesian province of Aceh on Sumatra island.

Coastal communities in Sri Lan-

ka and India lost some 47,000 people between them. The waves also crashed into tourist resorts in southern Thailand, killing more than 5,000, half of them foreign vacationers.

The disaster overwhelmed authorities in Aceh, where bodies littered devastated neighborhoods for weeks. Most victims were never formally identified and tens of thousands were buried in mass graves.

Nur Aini lost her husband and one of her two children to the waves.

"We are praying for them today even though I don't know where

they are buried," she said. "My remaining child still calls out for his father."

The disaster, one of the deadliest of the modern age, promoted a global outpouring of sympathy, with governments, individuals and corporations pledging more than \$13 billion in aid.

In Aceh, more than 100,000 houses, scores of schools and hospitals and kilometers of roads have been rebuilt. Whilst there have been complaints of corruption and waste, most people involved in the reconstruction pro-

Tsunami/A8

Text us your feedback: Inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Luzon will experience cloudy skies with scattered rains while the rest of the country will experience partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Iloilo	Partly Cloudy
Dagupan	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Davao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laosag	Cloudy with Rains	Yasoban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	San. Antonio	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Catapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Partly Cloudy

COMPILED BY: SCHATEL GUIGALA, FOR RESEARCH/12/26/07 SOURCE: PAGASA

Second FRONT PAGE

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Website: www.inquirer.net/nation



EZ2	FOUR DIGIT
24 1	2 9 7 0
(In exact order)	
Mid-Day	SUERTRES Evening
6 1 7 1 8 1	
MEGALOTTO 6/45	
2 5 19 30 37 44	
P18,273,279.60	

Talks on Sumilao hit snag

Palace expects SMC to file motion for reconsideration

By Michael Lim Ubac

NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE SETTLEMENT of the disputed Sumilao property during the Christmas break have apparently bogged down, with Malacañang conceding yesterday that San Miguel Corp. could avail of legal options to thwart any settlement with farmers.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita expects San Miguel to file soon a motion for reconsideration contesting the President's order reclassifying the disputed property from agro-industrial to agricultural use, paving the way for its reversion to the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

"You have to expect that those involved in the case will seek redress ... after exhausting administrative remedies, then they have recourse to go to the courts. So these are matters that only the courts can decide upon. We in the executive can't arrogate upon ourselves what is not within the power of the executive branch," he said.

Ermita disclosed that San Miguel lawyers were "preparing the appropriate legal steps."

Matter for the court

Asked if there were ongoing negotiations between Malacañang and SMC, he said: "That is matter for the court to decide," said Ermita.

According to Ermita, some sectors are

"urging the President to cause the issuance of a cease and desist order" to stop ongoing construction at the disputed land in Barangay San Vicente, Sumilao, Bukidnon.

"Again, we go by the legal process. We can't say ...let's just give in to their demand even if it is against the law. So we have to follow the law," said Ermita.

SMC is the parent company of the current landowner, San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI), which bought the 144-hectare Sumilao estate from the original landowner, Norberto Quisumbing in 2002, three years after the Supreme Court affirmed a 1996 Malacañang order converting it into agro-industrial estate.

In 2004, the farmers asked the government to revoke the conversion order, arguing that SMFI failed to develop the property in five years, and hence, the land should revert to them under CARP.

Private transaction

The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) had awarded the land to the farmers in 1995.

Ermita said the issue stemmed from a "private transaction" between Quisumbing and San Miguel Foods.

"Second, the order of the President turning around the conversion order in 1997 has directed that the land be given to the farmers under Carp," he said.

Ermita said there is a legal procedure involved. "In this case, it's an administrative action of the President. Therefore, there are certain modalities that need to be followed in order to give due process."



MANO PO.

A school official gives President Macapagal-Arroyo a traditional gesture of respect at Malacañang where the President hosted a meeting of education officials, college and university administrators and other stakeholders in the education sector. The meeting was held at the Aguinaldo State Dining Room.

LYN REILLO

Lim moved from Crame to Tanay, then to Isafp

By Nikko Dizon

HOURS AFTER ARMY BRIG. GEN. Danilo Lim arrived yesterday at the Army detention center in Tanay, Rizal, Armed Forces chief of staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. ordered him brought back to Quezon City and held at the high-security Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) compound.

The former Scout Ranger regiment commander had been transferred from the Philippine National Police detention center in Camp Crame, where he was held for almost a month with Sen. Antonio Trillanes and other "Magdalo" soldiers involved in the Nov. 29 Manila Peninsula takeover, to Camp Capinpin in Tanay in accordance with an order of Makati City judge Elmo Alameda dated Dec. 21.

Esperon, however, said he needed Lim in Camp Aguinaldo so the AFP Provost Marshal could conduct its own investigation of the Nov. 29 Manila Pen affair.

Lim is set to be moved to the Isafp Detention Center in Camp Aguinaldo today.

The AFP said it would soon file a

motion with the Makati court asking for "temporary custody" of Lim pending the Provost Marshal office's investigation.

Esperon ordered Lim's transfer upon the request of Col. Arthur Abadilla, the AFP provost marshal, the AFP Public Information Office (AFP-PIO) said in a statement.

Another reason cited in Esperon's order was the scheduled Jan. 15 arraignment on rebellion charges of Lim and the Magdalo officers before the Makati Regional Trial Court.

The AFP-PIO statement said the chief of staff granted Abadilla's request "by virtue of his authority" under Articles of War 70 (Arrest or Confinement) and "to expedite the probe without prejudice to due process."

On Christmas Day, Esperon had ordered Abadilla's office to investigate those involved in the Manila Pen takeover for possible violations of the Articles of War.

The provisions in the Articles of War cited in Esperon's order were: AW 97 (Neglect prejudicial to good order and military discipline); AW 74 (Causing a prisoner to escape thru neglect); AW 70 (Breach of arrest and/or escape from confinement); and AW 67 (Beginning or

joining in a mutiny or sedition).

These provisions would cover members of the military "still in active service who may have been involved" in the Manila Pen siege that had Lim and Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, a former Navy lieutenant, renewing the call for the ouster of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Asked why the Army general was ordered by Esperon to be moved to Isafp prior to filing the request for transfer with Judge Alameda, Zagala reiterated that the move was only "temporary."

Meanwhile, the wife of detained Marine Col. Ariel Querubin said Lim was already in his old cell shared with Marine Maj. Gen. Renato Miranda when news of Esperon's order arrived.

"His worry was the chickens he left behind. Gen. Miranda had said he only fed the chickens but couldn't give them tender loving care anymore," Maria Flor Querubin said.

Miranda, she said, was also taking care of his two small grandchildren.

Maria Flor said the Marine and Scout Ranger officers "had an enjoyable and memorable Christmas" with their families. With a report by Alcuin Papa

RP faces scandal in Tokyo land deal

THE PHILIPPINES FACES A POTENTIAL diplomatic scandal over a P5 billion transaction involving the development of a government-owned real estate property in Japan, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. warned yesterday.

The transaction involves the 2,488-square meter Nampedei property in the Shibuya district in Tokyo. It was acquired by the Philippine government as part of Japan's World War II reparations.

Pimentel said in a statement that the Nampedei property in an exclusive residential district was offered for commercial development so it could generate income in the same way that the Roppongi property, now an office building complex, did.

The Nampedei property now serves as a Philippine embassy storage facility.

Pimentel said that on Oct. 26 last year a Bids and Awards Committee (BAC)

formed by the Philippine government awarded the development right of the property to the Nagayama-Teisel Consortium, which in return agreed to pay the government P5 billion.

The problem came up when the Nagayama Consortium signed a power-of-attorney in favor of Masaichi Tsuchiya to develop the property. The two later quarreled over the deal and Nagayama subsequently revoked the power-of-attorney.

Pimentel questioned the Arroyo government's decision to recognize Masaichi's right to develop the property despite the revocation of the power-of-attorney.

He said while all six members of the BAC signed the award order, only three members signed a resolution recognizing Masaichi as the developer. He said Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita signed an order dated June 26, 2007 based on the BAC resolution.

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ **DOH, DOT in silent war over medical tourism bill** /A3

■ **NO STORM despite wet, rainy post-Christmas** /A7

■ **CABINET revamp looms** /A7

WASTONG PAGKAIN ABOT-KAYANG BILHIN

BILHIN PRESYO

NFA Rice	P18.25	Rice Premium	P27-30
Presyo sa lahat ng Barangay Food Terminal at Tindahan Natin.		Rice Fancy	P30-45
		Pork Liempo	P135-160
BILHIN PRESYO		Beef Tapadera	P200-250
Regular Well Milled	P20-25	Manok (whole)	P110-130
Well Milled Rice	P22-29	Itlog (piraso)	P4-7.75
Presyo sa Metro Manila at sa Priority One Provinces:		Ampalaya	P48-70
Zamboanga del Norte, Masbate, Maguindanao, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Mountain Province, Lanao del Norte, Camarines Norte, Sarangani, Zamboanga Sibugay.		Repolyo	P44-70
		Carrot	P45-60
		Habitswelas	P28-50
		Presyo sa palengke sa Metro Manila.	

NUTRI-TIP: Kumain ng malinis at ligtas na pagkain araw-araw.

HOTLINE: 0929-4438014
SOURCE: DA-Bureau of Agricultural Statistics

DOH, DOT in silent war over medical tourism bill

By Christian V. Esguerra

IS THERE A SILENT WAR BETWEEN THE Departments of Health and Tourism over the Philippine Medical Tourism Program?

Muntinlupa Rep. Rufino Biazon has filed a bill creating a Medical Tourism Bureau to "institutionalize" policies and programs of the country's emerging multibillion-dollar venture.

Medical tourism, which has so far earned around \$350 million for the country, packages medical procedures with recuperating stays in tropical resorts. Services range from various forms of cosmetic surgery to highly complicated procedures such as kidney transplantation.

Biazon said the proposal under House Bill No. 49 apparently did not sit well with DOH officials because the new bureau would be placed under the DOT, with the health department playing only a supporting role.

Instead, the DOH was drafting its own Medical Tourism Law with Gibac Rep. Joel Villanueva being eyed as a possible sponsor, said Health Undersecretary Jade del Mundo, the DOH point man in this program.

Matter of ego

"I think it's a matter of ego," Biazon told the INQUIRER yesterday.

"My bill isn't liked by the DOH because under my proposal, the bureau will be under the tourism department, the logic being the success of the medical tourism industry lies in promotion and marketing, which are the core competencies of the DOT."

Under HB 49, a revival of a failed legislative effort in the 13th Congress, the proposed Medical Tourism Bureau would be tasked to "administer, coordinate, and supervise all activities concerning health and wellness."

The bill was referred to the committees on government reorganization and tourism last July, but health officials have yet to show any support for the initiative, according to the lawmaker.

Del Mundo previously argued that the DOH should play a vital role in the program because foreigners went to the Philippines primarily for medical treatment. He said going to tourist destinations was secondary.

Healing and pleasure

But Biazon said the DOT, not the DOH, could more competently steer the program to "greater heights."

"Mixing healing and pleasure, so to speak—who has the expertise to do that?" he said. "It is the DOT."

In the proposed Medical Tourism Bureau, the DOH would be tapped to concentrate on the medical aspect of the program such as the accreditation of institutions wanting to be part of the venture.

So far, Biazon said the program was being managed only by an ad hoc committee, which included Del Mundo.

The lawmaker also downplayed the role of the DOH in medical tourism, saying it was the "private sector that drives the program."

"Capital investment in medical services and facilities are borne by the private medical institutions, companies, and professionals," he said. "The DOH's only role is to ensure that these medical institutions comply with basic health and safety standards."

Biazon cited St. Luke's Medical Center's decision to upgrade its medical equipment to put it at par with other medical institutions abroad.

"It was (the hospital's) business decision, not the DOH's," he said.

On CA deck: Strike three, you're out!

By Norman Bordadora

MEMBERS OF THE BICAMERAL COMMISSION on Appointments (CA) are considering adopting a rule that will reject presidential appointees who have been bypassed thrice by the powerful commission.

"It's not yet a policy. It's a proposal and looks like it will develop into a rule or policy next year," said Davao City Rep. Prospero Nograles, head of the House contingent to the CA, in a text message yesterday.

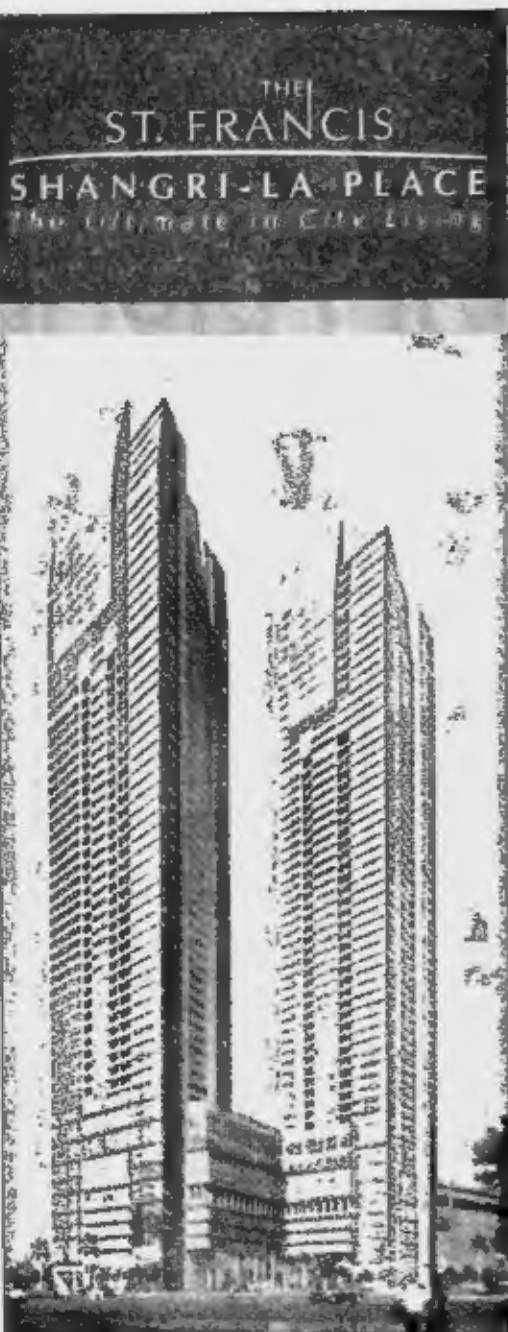
"Three bypasses, a triple bypass ... No more fourth," he added in jest, comparing an official bypassed three times to a triple heart bypass patient in serious condition.

Nograles said the current CA also told appointees pending confirmation to complete their documentary requirements in 30 days or face rejection.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez has been bypassed by past commissions several times since he was appointed to the post in 2004. He has already been bypassed once by the current CA.

Nograles, however, said the proposal will only count the bypasses of the current CA.

He was optimistic Gonzalez would not strike out. "I'm sure he will be confirmed the next time around because the House contingent will push for his confirmation," Nograles said.



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HANGAD NG MAMAMAYAN

Ngayong Kapaskuhan at Bagong Taon: Kapayapaan, Pagkakaisa, Kaunlaran!

Pahayag ng mamamayang sawang-sawa na sa panggugulo ng mga puwersang nais mang-agaw ng kapangyarihan.

26 Disyembre 2007

ANONG URI ng Pasko at Bagong Taon kaya mayroon tayo ngayon kapag hinayaan natin ang militaristang pangkating Trillanes-Lim at kanilang mga kasapakat na magtagumpay sa kanilang pinakahuling pagtatangka na agawin ang kapangyarihan upang makapagtatag sila ng isang diktadura sa anyo ng pamamayani ng isang hunta?

Ang Pasko at Bagong Taon sa ilalim ng isang hunta ay tiyak na madilim at malagim at puno ng walang katiyakan.

Mabuti na lamang at ang kalakhan ng ating mamamayan ay gising na, at hindi na nagpapagamit sa mga grupong malinaw ang ambisyong mailuklok ang kanilang mga sarili sa kapangyarihan kahit sa anupamang pamamaraan –

sukdulang magkagulo ang bayan. Liban sa mangilan-ngilan — isang matandang pulitikong tila pinuro na ng panahon ang katwiran; isang retiradong akademiko na nag-aasang rebolusyonaryo; mga abogado ng kulang-sa-pansin; mga relihiyosong tila alagad ni Padre Damaso; at kakarampot na Kaliwa't-Kanang personalidad — hindi sinuportahan ng mamamayan sina Trillanes at Lim.

Dahil wala silang suportang mamamayan na maipapananggalang, daglian at bahagbuntot na sumuko sina Trillanes at Lim, kasama ang kanilang mangilan-ngilang kakutsaba. Dagsa ang puna ng bayan sa kanilang ginawa. Malinaw ang nais ng bayan — kapayapaan at katiwasayan.

Bagaman muling naibalik sa kulungan sina Trillanes at Lim, dapat na maging

“Malinaw ang nais ng bayan — kapayapaan at katiwasayan.”

mapagpasya na ang pamahalaan sa pagpapataw ng karampatang hustisya at kaparusahan laban sa kanila. At bagaman pinalaya ang ilang mga sibilyang kasabwat nila, ang asta ng ilan sa mga ito nang sila ay pinalaya ay patunay lamang na bahagi sila sa nabigong planong pang-aagaw ng kapangyarihan ng militaristang grupong Magdalo.

SAWANG-SAWA NA ang mamamayan sa panggugulo ng mga desperadong puwersang nais maagaw ang kapangyarihan labas sa proseso ng demokrasya at ng ating Saligang Batas. Kaya kami ay nananawagan sa buong sambayanan na hayaan na nating mamayani ang kapayapaan sa ating bayan, baka sakaling matuloy na at di na muling mauudlot ang pag-unlad ng ating ekonomya, tungo sa pagbuti ng kalagayan ng ating ordinaryong mamamayan.

Nanawagan din kami sa ating mga kababayan na hanggang ngayon ay nabubulagan pa sa mga mapanlinlang na ideyolohiya, maging ng dulong Kanan at dulong Kaliwa, na nagtataguyod ng karahasan upang maagaw ang kapangyarihan. Higit na mapaniil na pamahalaan at lipunan ang tunay na tunguhin ng mga ideyoliyang ito.

Ngayong Pasko at Bagong Taon, regaluhan natin ang ating mga sarili—at ang ating bayan—ng kapayapaan, pagkakaisa at kaunlaran. Halina't magkaisa, itaguyod ang kapayapaan at isulong ang kaunlaran.

KONGRESO NG MAMAMAYAN

Central Luzon-National Capital Region-Southern Tagalog Chapters



BOSES NG MAMAMAYAN

"Ang ginawa ni Trillanes ay isang dagok na kung kailan dumadami ang magandang balita sa ekonomya, kanya namang sinira. Mas mabuti na bigyan daan na lang ang katahimikan dahil yan ang nararapat." — Joven Pajora, Parola.com

"Maliwanag na ang RTC walkout ang pinaka-uncoordinated military adventurism na pinilit magpusturang may suporta ng mamamayan dahil sa presensya ng ilang 'civil society' organizations." — Amy Cris, Malabon

"Hindi maganda ang ginawa ni Trillanes na pambabastos sa batas. Isa pa mandin siya sa mga 'mambabastos' daw. Pinatunayan lang niya na wala siyang malasakit sa mahihirap dahil kung kailan maayos na ang ekonomya, manggugulo naman siya. Dapat siguro magsisi ang 11 milyong bumoto sa kanya bilang isa sa mga senador." — Nanette Santiago, Smokey Mountain

"Para sa akin, hindi asal ng nahalal na opisyal ang ginawa ni Trillanes. Ginugulo nila ang sambayanan at sila ang dapat patalsikin sa puwesto. Pag sila ba ang maupo sigurado ba silang kaya niya lahat ayon sa ilusyon nila? Kawawa na kaming mahihirap. Tigi lan na nila ang panggugulo." — Tess Lumactod, Baseco

"The present government was duly elected until 2010 and the President must do her duty and serve. We will never support illegal acts by power hungry individuals." — Amy Azarcon, chairperson, Cavite Multipurpose Cooperative

"The people want peace and progress. They are tired of destabilizers and coup plotters." — Victor Caguimbal, secretary general, Alyansa ng Mamamayan ng Rizal (Almariz)

"The economy is growing. The Manila Peninsula siege was not needed at all. It was a political exercise with self-serving ends." — Elpidio Clarianes, chairman, Abakada-Laguna

"He (Trillanes) is a disappointment to the military and as a legislator. The people did not vote for him to lead in the destruction of our democracy. He deserves punishment." — Jojo Sapio, chairman, Galing Manggagawang Pinoy sa Abroad — Hong Kong

"Bumaba ang tingin naming kay Senador Trillanes. Parang hindi siya senador." — Women of BHIT Zone, Taguig City

"What Trillanes did really gave us bad image. Imagine an elected senator staging a rebellion, a law maker becoming a law breaker. His action will create uncertainty and fear among prospective investors, thus will affect the economy." — Erika Enriquez, Tinig ng Kabataan ng Guadalupe Nuevo Market

"Beneath the 'tiger look' of Trillanes is a tantrum-stricken little boy lost in the jungle of politics and illusion. Hayaan mo na kaming makapag-aral ng tahimik at matiwasay. Sana yung ipambabayad mo sa Manila Peninsula ay ibili na lang ng electric fan para dito sa PUP." — Hannah-Karina C. Garcia, 3rd year Computer Engineering, PUP

"Mali talaga ang ginawa ni Trillanes. Ang komento ng mga tao dito ginugulo lang nila ang pamumuno ni GMA kung kailan gumaganda ang takbo ng ekonomiya saka sila gumagawa ng ganyan. Nararapat lamang na patawan sila ng parusa para maipakita sa masang Pilipino na seryoso ang gobyerno sa sinumang gustong umagaw sa kapangyarihan sa labas sa Saligang Batas." — Amy Gaces, Navotas

"In the first place hindi dapat naging senador si Trillanes kasi ang alam lang niya ay manggulo. Ang gawaing yan ay hindi dapat sa isang senador. Suporta kami sa anumang aksyon ng pamahalaan sa mga nanggugulo sa ating bayan." — Elmer Gutierrez, government employee

"The rebellion of the Trillanes group is aimed at fomenting disunity and chaos. Sana maisip niya ang consequences ng ginawa niya. We pray ma-heal ang bansa natin. God bless us all." — Vicente Gini, pastor, Christ the Living Stone Church, Pasay City

"Ano ba naman iyang si Trillanes? Ayaw na ba talaga niyang umunlad ang Pilipinas?" — Dr. Paul Relos, San Francisco, California

"The fact that no one came to support Trillanes should be clear enough to all those who want to destabilize government that the people are already tired of destabilizers like Trillanes and Lim." — Cris Reyes, Sta. Clara, California

Motorcade rites to kick off UP centennial

A MOTORCADE PARTICIPATED IN by the different units of the University of the Philippines from across the country will highlight the launching of the UP System centennial Jan. 8 and kick off celebrations for the State University's 100th years.

The UP Alumni Association, the organization spearheading the kick-off activities, said the motorcade will start at the UP campus in Padre Faura, Manila—where the first UP campus was first established in 1908—and will proceed to UP Diliman in Quezon City beginning at 12 noon.

UPAA President Ponciano E. Rivera Jr. said the Manila convoy will then be joined by motorcades from UP Baguio, UP Pampanga and UP Los Baños and will converge with the UP Diliman contingent along Quezon Avenue at an appointed time. The grand motorcade is expected to enter the Diliman campus at about 4 p.m., after which a series of grand launching ceremonies will unfold.

Lion dancers, ati-athan performers and a host of UP dance groups will welcome the motorcade in front of the Oblation statue where a big crowd of alumni, students, faculty, staff, supporters and well-wishers are already gathered. Sky jumpers bearing the emblem of the various UP campuses will land in the open area near the College of Mass Communication.

Ten tambuli players will then blow their horns from atop the Administration building, amid the ceremonial firing of 100 rockets ("kwitis") to announce the start of the program.

A total of 100 torches will be relayed around UP Diliman's Academic Oval, with the first flame being lit by a 100-year old alumnus. The last flame will be lighted by UP President Emerlinda Roman, who will then proceed to light the UP Flame as all the flaming 99 torches are extinguished.

Simultaneous with the lighting of the

cauldron, the "UP @ 100" lights display at the Quezon Hall go on and the grandly lit trees around the academic oval come to life, making the UP campus blaze with lights on its centennial.

One hundred rifle shots will be fired into the air by the UP Rifle Team, ushering in the announcement by President Roman that the UP Centennial Year is open.

A free concert featuring internationally acclaimed UP alumni, among them, the Philippine Madrigal Singers, Ryan Cayabyab, the UP Symphonic Orchestra, Nanette Inventor, and UP Symphonic Band follows at the UP Amphitheater. The evening will be capped by a grand fireworks display.

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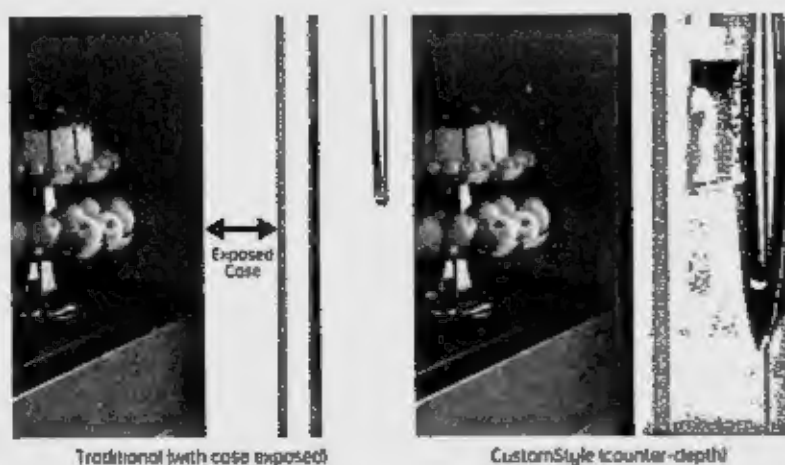
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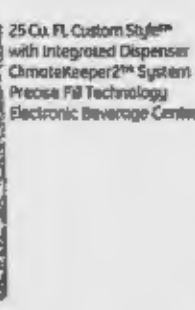
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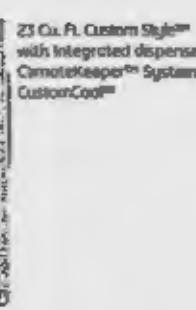
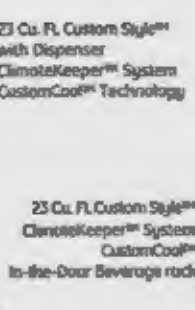
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GMA sacks prisons chief after Jalosjos escape

From page A1

ment of Justice in Manila yesterday and later told reporters that he "presumed" his appointment had "something to do also with the Jalosjos case."

"I will just do my job for the meantime as director of the [BuCor]," he said, adding that his appointment on the day after Christmas spoke of the "urgency and importance" of the job.

Asked what he would do with regard to Jalosjos, Calderon said he would await orders from Gonzalez.

Later, in a phone interview with the INQUIRER, Calderon said: "I will make sure that nobody escapes. I am ready for this job. It's practically law enforcement."

He also said he would reshuffle jail wardens and guards to avoid a repeat of the Jalosjos stunt.

Habeas corpus

In Zamboanga City, Jalosjos' chief lawyer Alfredo Jimenez said the ex-lawmaker's legal team had filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus.

"Authorities holding him right now have to explain judiciously why they keep on detaining my client," Jimenez said.

According to the lawyer, Jalosjos has served his sentence and should now be out of jail, and his arresting officers "could be liable for warrantless arrest."

"However, since my client has been turned over to the [BuCor], that's where the writ of habeas corpus applies," Jimenez said.

The hearing for the petition is scheduled today at the Regional Trial Court Branch 16 under Judge Jesus Carbon.

Jalosjos, a former representative of Zamboanga del Norte, was convicted in 1997 of statutory rape of an 11-year-old girl and sentenced to two life terms. In April, Ms Arroyo commuted his sentence to 16 years.

Jalosjos left the New Bilibid

'Child rapist' or 'minor rapist'

ZAMBOANGA CITY—"MINOR rapist" will do, thank you.

Lawyers and kin of Romeo Jalosjos yesterday appealed to the media to desist from calling him a "child rapist."

"We will argue about reasons, but we don't question the word 'conviction' [except when he is tagged] a 'convicted child rapist,'" said Jalosjos' chief legal counsel, Alfredo Jimenez.

According to Jimenez, "child" has an "open meaning" and refers to "kids, maybe toddlers, [up] to 12 years old."

"We are urging the media to use 'convicted minor rapist,'" the lawyer said.

Jalosjos' victim was an 11-year-old girl.

Earlier, the rape convict's son, Keith Frederick "Buller" Jalosjos, told the INQUIRER: "We are hurt whenever we read stories about my father, especially if he's repeatedly labeled a convicted child rapist."



JALOSJOS

Bullet, a board member of Zamboanga del Norte's first district, added: "No one knows the real story except the family."

"We know our father and he has several children. And it's painful to listen [to], watch or read news [bearing] the insensitive tag on him."

"My father is not a rapist. The issue about the girl is not about rape; it's all about politics. OK, he has been convicted—OK, that's fine, but at least he deserves respect."

Dapitan City Councilor Apple Anggolong said Jalosjos had been called a rapist, a child molester and a convicted rapist "over and over again."

"But there are readers who don't know the real story of the case," Anggolong said. "Some think rape is the real [issue], where consent was violated and is the main requisite of the commission of the crime. But in the case of Jalosjos, it was statutory rape."

Bullet Jalosjos also said his father was doing fine in the San Ramon Penal Colony and had made friends with the inmates.

"In fact, a day after he was detained there, he started playing tennis," the son said.

Jimenez agreed: "He's all right there—just relaxing most of the time. And we keep advising him to be happy. It may appear that evil triumphed over good, but it will be temporary." Julie S. Alpala, *Inquirer Mindanao*

Prisons (NBP) in Muntinlupa City on Dec. 22 and flew to Dapitan City. He was arrested in the early hours of Dec. 23 and taken to the San Ramon Penal Colony, some 30 kilometers from Zamboanga City.

Prior to his walkabout and after his arrest, he had insisted that he was a free man by virtue of a Dec. 16 release order, which, according to the DOJ, is unofficial.

Dapat to speak out

Gonzalez said he had known since two nights ago of the plan to replace Dapaton, but had to wait for Calderon to accept the post before making an announcement.

Dapaton has been informed of the matter and will follow Ms Arroyo's directive, Gonzalez said. But he added that Dapaton

also wanted to speak out.

Gonzalez said other BuCor officials were also under investigation, and some of them might be suspended shortly.

He said the DOJ could not suspend too many officials because if it did so, there would be no one left to supervise the BuCor.

The investigation will center on who leaked Jalosjos' supposed release order, who authorized its preparation, and how the convict was able to escape, Gonzalez said, adding that these issues fell under the concept of command responsibility.

Return to NBP

Gonzalez said Jalosjos could be back at the NBP before 2008 rolled in: "Chances are, I will order his return to Manila."

He said he was still thinking

about the exact date because certain security concerns were being considered.

"I'm not talking here only of [Jalosjos'] personal security, but [also the] security of the entire system. Like, for example, he may be secured but some people may attempt to spirit him away," Gonzalez said.

Another factor being taken into account is the proximity of the San Ramon Penal Colony to Jalosjos' hometown of Dapitan.

"It's not dangerous, but the temptation for his diehard followers [may be great]," Gonzalez said.

"There's no question he has a lot of diehard followers who may want to take him away. I don't think Jalosjos is a flight risk outside the country, although he's been placed under a hold-departure or-

der," he added.

The justice secretary said he was studying the possibility of canceling Jalosjos' "living out" privileges, although he would remain a minimum-security prisoner.

"We can't allow a repeat [of his caper]," Gonzalez said. "He really belongs in the NBP. Under normal prison rules, it's only the director who can transfer a prisoner."

Conspiracy

According to Gonzalez, the possibility of a conspiracy among prison officials and civilians, including members of Jalosjos' family, to help the convict escape is being investigated as well.

"If his brother, [Dapitan Mayor] Dominador Jalosjos, who fetched him [from the NBP], has something to do with this, he should be included. It's a top-to-bottom investigation," Gonzalez said.

The justice secretary denied that Jalosjos, a political ally of the President, was being given preferential treatment.

"I don't think he's favored ... The fact that he has two congressmen [relatives]—he has control of almost the entire Zamboanga del Norte—did not play any influence here because the President was unrelenting in saying he has to comply with AO 155," Gonzalez said.

He was referring to Ms Arroyo's policy of releasing prisoners when they turn 70—a policy that, he said, she wanted to prevail in Jalosjos' case.

The convict turns 70 in 2010.

GMA's alter ego

Even Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita denied that Malacañang was handling Jalosjos' case with kid gloves, or distancing itself from it.

Ermita said Malacañang was leaving the matter to Gonzalez, who, he pointed out, was serving as the President's alter ego.

"What's involved here is what's in the law," he said at his weekly news briefing. He added: "Somebody in

prison is covered by the law on how long he should serve the term in the public and said the DOJ was expected to submit the findings and recommendations on how Jalosjos was able to pull off his caper.

"We give everyone due course ... We don't give knee-jerk reactions."

Ermita asked for patience from the public and said the DOJ was expected to submit the findings and recommendations on how Jalosjos was able to pull off his caper.

He said he had learned from his latest conversation with Gonzalez that "a wide-ranging investigation" was going on.

"Because it's quite unbelievable that what happened last week could happen without any planning ... or complicity of people," he said.

Laxity

Asked whether there was laxity on the part of jail authorities, Ermita said this could be seen "precisely from the outset."

He said he had read in the papers how, on Dec. 22, Jalosjos was able to go to church and then "just walked away without anybody accosting him—and then ... he was in the province."

Asked whether someone would be sacked for this, Ermita merely said he was sure recommendations would be made. He also said it was possible that officials found liable would be slapped with something stronger than a reprimand.

Asked whether this was what the Palace was asking, Ermita said: "We're not asking [for] anything, but we will depend on the DOJ position. Remember, what will come out [is] the result of the investigation. But the Palace or the President doesn't have to be bound by that recommendation. Maybe the President can think of something else. But for the moment, we will await the report." With reports from Alcin Papa and Christine O. Avendaño in Manila; and Julie S. Alpala, *Inquirer Mindanao*

NBI to take custody of witness to killing of Davao broadcaster

From page A1

And Davao Mayor Rodrigo Duterte yesterday offered a P500,000 reward to anyone who could help arrest those behind the killing of commentator Fernando "Batman" Lintuan.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said he had sent an NBI team to Davao to help in the investigation of the Dec. 24 killing of Lintuan, and to secure the young witness.

"He is a 15-year-old boy, so the President ordered that [he] be placed under the [WPP]," Gonzalez told reporters. "We have to make arrangements with the family also. If necessary, we will place the family under the WPP, depending on our assessment of the threat to the boy."

Gonzalez said the boy was able to speak with and could identify Lintuan's killer.

He said the identity and capture of the gunman were vital in identifying the mastermind of the killing.

Gonzalez also said the physical evidence gathered after the ambush on Lintuan would not be of much significance: "Physical evidence won't mean very much, as far as the masterminds are concerned."

Hard-hitting

Lintuan, 51, was attacked by a man riding tandem with another on a motorcycle while he was driving home from radio station dxGO. He was the fifth journalist killed this year. Police are looking into the possibility that the ambush on Lintuan could have arisen from his hard-hitting commentaries on his radio program.

In Malacañang, Anthony Golez, deputy spokesperson of President Macapagal-Arroyo, said government critics were not the only ones getting killed. "The senseless murder of journalist Batman Lintuan is a



POLICEMEN inspect the car used by radio commentator Ferdie Lintuan (right) after he was killed in an ambush in Davao City.

ING GONZALEZ/INQUIRER MINDANAO

great loss to the profession he represented," Golez said in a text message to the INQUIRER, adding that Lintuan was the founding president of the Davao Sports Writers Association and a consultant of the Philippine Sports Commission under the Office of the President.

"If administration critics angle this as journalists killed under [the Arroyo] administration, we can say that Batman [was] technically our government journalist for sports development, and he was also killed! So not all GMA critics are victims of murder here," Golez said.

P500,000 reward

In Davao City, Duterte announced the P500,000 reward in the course of assailing "some politicians here who are quick to the draw in blaming certain groups hours after Lintuan was killed."

"To do that sans evidence and without giving due course to a formal investigation to the height of injustice to Mr. Lintuan. It's like killing him all over again," the mayor said.

He added: "Death is a sacred

and tragic matter; we must spare it from political exploitation."

Duterte was apparently referring to Davao Rep. Prospero Nograles, who had immediately condemned the killing.

Nograles has been quoted in some media reports as saying that Lintuan's attackers could have been members of the shadowy Davao Death Squad, a group blamed for the execution of suspected criminals in the city.

Most of the attacks blamed on the death squad have remained unsolved.

Duterte said he would shoulder all the necessary expenses of Lintuan's family.

He also promised to quit his post if the Office of the Ombudsman and the Commission on Audit would find irregularities in the Davao City People's Park.

Lintuan had discussed in his radio program alleged irregularities in the construction of the newly opened People's Park. He had claimed that the trees planted in the park were overpriced.

Said Duterte: "If [the Ombudsman and COA] see anything overpriced by P10, I will



resign and swear not to run for office again."

'Unseen groups'

Duterte said his 17 years in public office were graft-free.

"Mr. Lintuan has been criticizing me since 1988, and I have respected him for his views. It is the height of stupidity for me to do harm to him hours after he aired his criticism on the People's Park," he said.

Duterte blamed "unseen groups at work" that had purportedly "set up a scenario wherein City Hall is to be blamed for the killing of a journalist."

"Thus, I call on my political colleagues to stop riding on the issue of Mr. Lintuan's killing and let true justice take its course. Clearly, the issue here is justice and press freedom, not politics," he said.

But Nograles said Davao police needed only "will" to be able to solve Lintuan's killing. "If the authorities managed to swiftly solve a kidnapping incident here, how much more the killing [of Lintuan]?" the lawmaker said.

Nograles was citing a police

operation in July when a wealthy businessman was rescued from his kidnappers a few days after he was taken hostage.

Four of the suspects—including a policeman—were killed in a shootout during the rescue operation.

"If the police do not want to solve it, then it can't be solved," Nograles told the INQUIRER during a visit to the wake for Lintuan at the Cosmopolitan Funeral Parlor.

Death squad pattern

Nograles said he had been told that there appeared to be a "pattern" of the Davao Death Squad.

"That's what was reported to me," he said, adding that he

was not alluding to anyone as the purported mastermind of the attack on Lintuan.

"Everyone has their own thoughts [on this], but let the police do their job," he said.

In its progress report on Tuesday, the NBI said the witness had described the gunman as having a "muscular" build and a mole on the upper right side of his lips.

The NBI said investigators had to rely on the witness' description because Lintuan's companions at the time of the incident—broadcaster Edgar Banzon and Lucio Ceniza—said they did not see the assailant's face because they "instinctively ducked" when the shots rang out. With a report from Michael Lim Ubac

Joker 'sends' holiday greetings from afterlife

From page A1

two months after he died.

Chet Fitch died in October at age 88. Weeks later Christmas cards, 34 of them, began arriving—written in his hand with a return address of "Heaven."

The greeting read: "I asked Big Guy if I could sneak back and send some cards. At first he said no; but at my insistence he finally said, 'Oh well, what the heaven, go ahead but don't (tarry) there.' Wish I could tell you about things here but words cannot explain."

"Better get back as Big Guy said he stretched a point to let me in the first time, so I had better not press my luck. I'll probably be seeing you (some) sooner than you think. I'll be seeing you a very Merry Christmas. Chet Fitch"

A friend for nearly 25 years, Debbie Hansen Bernard said, "All I could think was, 'You little stinker!'"

"It was amazing," she said. "Just so Chet, always wanting to get the last laugh."

The mailing was a joke Fitch worked on for two decades with his barber, Patty Dean, 57.

Dean told the Ashland Daily Tidings newspaper this week that Fitch kept updating the mailing list and giving her extra money when postal rates went up.

This fall, she said, Fitch looked up to her from the chair.

"You must be getting tired of waiting to mail those cards," he told her. "I think you'll probably be able to mail them this year."

He died a week later. AP

No storm despite wet, rainy post-Christmas

By TJ Burgonio

A DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS, government and company employees in Metro Manila yesterday drove and rode back to work on wet roads as rain fell incessantly for hours in some parts of Luzon.

The light to moderate rain surprised many and prompted

some to think this was a sign of an oncoming storm. But the weather bureau said this was the effect of two rain-inducing weather systems.

"There's no storm," senior weather specialist Robert Rivera of the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration curtly said in a phone interview.

The rainfall, which lasted from morning to afternoon, was the effect of the tailend of the cold front affecting Luzon, and the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) affecting Visayas and Mindanao, he said.

Both systems form mass of clouds that bring rain.

Today, the rains are forecast to continue in Luzon, while rain showers and thunderstorms are expected in the Visayas and Mindanao, according to the weather specialist.

"Based on the numerical model forecast, this may even persist in the next 48 hours," he said.

The cold front happens when the cold air from the northeasterly winds converges with the warm air from the easterly winds. This leads to the formation of clouds that bring rain.

A shallow low pressure area, another rain-inducing system that developed last Monday, had dissipated after hitting land

in Mindanao, and had no effect, the weather bureau said.

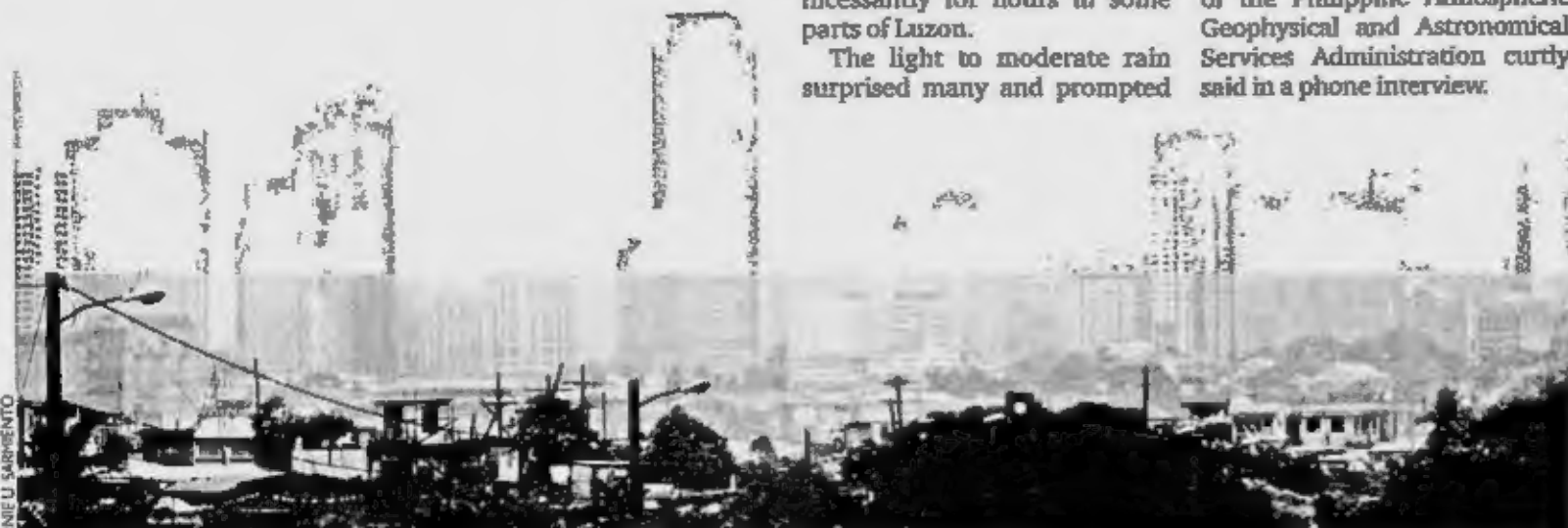
By Thursday, the sky will clear up in Luzon, but it will remain cloudy in the Visayas and Mindanao, Rivera said.

Based on its forecast for the week, Pagasa said that scattered patches of showers would continue in the Visayas and Mindanao, and would become more frequent and widespread in the eastern sections in the next few days.

The rain in these areas might trigger flashfloods and landslides, it warned.

The bureau also alerted fishermen in sea boards of northern and central Luzon of moderate to high waves due to the surge of the northeast monsoon (Amihan), which is associated with the cool temperature.

More rain is expected next month with the development of a moderately strong La Niña in the Pacific Ocean, Pagasa had said.



MIST AND FOG engulf the skyline of the Ortigas Center in Pasig as Metro Manilans woke up to a wet and rainy morning yesterday, a day after Christmas.

Cabinet revamp looms

By Michael Lim Ubac

THERE WILL BE A MAJOR revamp in the Cabinet of President Macapagal-Arroyo next year.

Malacañang has served notice to all members of the Cabinet and all presidential appointees, including officials of government-owned and -controlled corporations and government financial institutions, that a revamp is underway early next year.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, however, said that the reorganization of President Arroyo's official family was a "continuing thing" to check the performance of all presidential appointees because "everyone serves at the pleasure of the President."

But Ermita specifically reminded officials, particularly the overlying ones, of the GOCCs and GFIs, to start packing.

"Whether there is submission or not (of courtesy resignations), nothing will prevent the President

from reorganizing, reshuffling or changing people in her Cabinet," he said, disclosing that not all top officials of GOCCs and GFIs had complied with Ms Arroyo's order to submit courtesy resignations.

In June, the President had asked for the courtesy resignations of GOCC and GFI top officials.

When asked to assess the Arroyo administration's performance this year, Ermita said:

"I have no specific figures to go by. From where I sit, my gut feel is the performance of Cabinet members is very satisfactory in serving the interest and general welfare of the people. Improving the lot in life of the people... that's the essence of governance."

Ermita said the Cabinet would rate itself on how it was able to bring down poverty incidence in the country.

In his regular press conference yesterday, Ermita said President Arroyo could reshuffle her administration anytime.

"The President is a hands-on (boss). She is monitoring the performance of all her Cabinet members," said Ermita.

The appointment of nine Cabinet members has not been confirmed by the Commission on Appointments (CA).

Thus, the President had to issue an ad interim appointment to the nine Cabinet members bypassed by the CA.

Ermita said the names of the nine Cabinet members have been forwarded to the CA for reconsideration.

He said there was no law that restricted the President from reappointing "people whom she trusts."

"The choice of Cabinet members is the prerogative of the President. She appoints people who she thinks can help her run the government, people that she knows and has trust and confidence in and therefore, there is no law that says they (CA) can adopt such a policy," Ermita said.

Buencamino; 80

ENGINEER BIENVENIDO

Viri Buencamino, former executive vice president of the Construction and Development Corporation of the Philippines (CD-CP—now Philippine National Construction Corporation) died on Christmas Day, at age 80.

Buencamino supervised the construction of the longest bridge in the country, the San Juanico Bridge that connects Leyte and Samar, as CD-CP project manager. He also supervised such projects

as the North and South Luzon Expressway.

His remains lie at the Arlington Funeral Homes on Araneta Avenue. Interment will be on Dec. 30 after a 7 a.m. Mass at Arlington and a 10 a.m. Mass at Barrio San Jose in San Miguel, Bulacan. He will be buried at the Buencamino mausoleum in San Miguel Municipal Cemetery in Bulacan.

He is survived by his wife, Consuelo Calupitan, 8 children, and grandchildren.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, December 27, 2007
John, Apostle and Evangelist

1st Reading: John 1:1-4
Gospel: John 20:1a, 2-9

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala ran to Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved. And she said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they have laid him."

Peter then set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down and saw the linen cloths lying flat, but he did not enter.

Then Simon Peter came following him and entered the tomb; he, too, saw the linen cloths lying flat. The napkin, which had been around his head was not lying flat like the other linen cloths but lay rolled up in its place. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and believed.

Commentary

This is what we must proclaim with our lives singularly and in community, and in our words—what was proclaimed to us—life that was present to the Father from the beginning, and life that became flesh that we could touch, and see, and hear witness to: Jesus, the glory of the Father, in the power of the Spirit. We are to live bearing witness to our God in joy. This is John the beloved disciple's message. He is the symbol for all those baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus, the beloved who "see and believe," who wait upon the authority of those who do not see/believe because of their sin (Simon Peter) and who cannot see who Jesus truly is because they cling to something they want to hold on to (Mary of Magdala).

We have entered the tomb and have been baptized. We have been loved and called beloved of God, with Jesus. We live to witness to Jesus' words, life, and resurrection. This is our vocation, our calling, and our life in community. All of us are of the community of the beloved disciple. We too must write love letters to the friends of God in exile, not just with words, but with our flesh and blood.

Correction

IN THE DEC. 26 ISSUES, the banner story—"Why kill journalists?"—misstated that Fernando Lintuan's son Von Carlo was also in high school. Lintuan's youngest son is only in grade 5.

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, China Road Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Lorna Kalaw Tiral, readers' advocate, e-mail address: readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph or fax Nos. 897-47-93/94, Attn: Readers Advocate. Her phone number is 897-8808 Local 342.

Oil firms offer discounts

OIL FIRMS ARE GIVING motorists another reason to celebrate this holiday season by slashing the prices of gasoline by P1 a liter and of diesel and kerosene by 50 centavos a liter up to the end of the year.

Eastern Petroleum Corp. initiated the promo at 2 p.m. yesterday, prompting refiners Petron Corp. and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. to offer the same price discounts "in selected competitive trading areas."

In a telephone interview yesterday, Shell general manager for external affairs Roberto Kanapi said market forces would continue to dictate the prices of its products.

For his part, Eastern Petroleum chair and chief executive Fernando Martinez said in a separate in-

terview that if international prices would stabilize in the coming days, the oil firm would likely retain its discounted fuel prices and not revert to the old prices.

According to data from the Department of Energy, the regional benchmark Dubai crude slightly dropped to \$84.93 a barrel in the first 19 days of December from \$86.87 a barrel last month. In October, Dubai crude price was pegged at only \$77.12 a barrel.

Excluding the discounts, prices of premium unleaded gasoline range between P42.53 and P45.77 a liter, of diesel between P35.41 and P38.53 a liter, and of kerosene between P39.80 and P44.30 a liter. All prices are inclusive of the 12-percent value-added tax.

Abigail L. Ho

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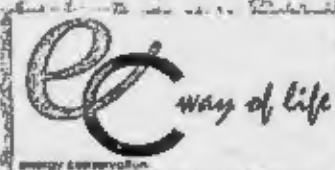
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Tsunami survivors await new page

From page A1

cess say it has gone well.

Reconstruction

Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, head of agency charged with rebuilding the Indonesian regions hit by the tsunami, said the reconstruction pace was the fastest in the world.

"There are shortfalls which, of course, need to be addressed but all parties that are working in rehabilitating and reconstructing Aceh and Nias have shown significant achievements," he said in a statement.

Mangkusubroto said another 20,000 homes were due to be completed by June next year.

But Yulida, a survivor who lost two children, said she still had no home. "I hope that they can build a house for me as soon as possible," she told Reuters.

Turning a new page

"I hope we can turn a new page now and leave sadness, cries and tears behind us," Aceh Governor Irwandi Yusuf told hundreds gathered at a prayer ceremony in the hard-hit town of Calang.

"I hope one day we can pay our debt to the world by becoming a donor to other countries hit by disasters," said Yusuf, a former rebel fighter who was detained in a jail that was destroyed by the tsunami.

He was elected in December last year following the signing of a historic peace pact between the government and the separatist Free Aceh Movement eight months after the tsunami struck. The end of the 29-year separatist conflict in 2005 was one of the few silver linings of the disaster.

The tsunami drill in Indonesia took place on the western tip of Java island close to the capital, Jakarta. It was attended by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and other top government officials.

During the drill, thousands of factory workers and villagers scrambled to higher ground as sirens blared. As part of the drill, authorities also tested the response of emergency relief teams to a mock chemical leak in a factory if an 8.5 magnitude quake were to hit the area.

Expensive warning systems

Since the tsunami, Indian Ocean countries have installed expensive warning systems and staged periodic evacuation drills to prepare better for another such disaster.

Foreign governments are helping Indonesia establish a nationwide network of buoys and high-tech communications equipment that would give coastal communities warning if there is a tsunami. The network is up and running in several regions of the country, but 20 more buoys are due to be launched in 2008.

Indonesia is frequently rocked by powerful earthquakes because of its position on the "Pacific Ring of Fire," an area of volcanoes and tectonic fault lines encircling the Pacific Basin.

The observances came amid widespread flooding in parts of Indonesia. Heavy rains triggered landslides that killed dozens of people on Java island, though far from the scene of the tsunami and Wednesday's drill.

Sri Lanka, India

Sri Lanka, which suffered 31,000 deaths, marked the anniversary by opening a showpiece bridge in the southern

coastal town of Matara, gifted by South Korea.

President Mahinda Rajapakse observed two minutes of silence at 9:25 a.m., the time when the first giant waves lashed the coastline in a disaster that also displaced a million people on the island.

Sri Lanka's reconstruction work has also been dogged by graft. Renewed fighting has likewise blocked relief to survivors, with less than a fifth of the money pledged properly accounted for, according to watchdogs.

In India, where more than 16,000 people died, hundreds of survivors, mostly poor fishermen and their families, held a procession in Nagapattinam district in southern Tamil Nadu state, where more than 6,000 people died.

Youngsters from tsunami-affected families offered flowers to the victims, while earlier in the day, parents who had lost children three years ago thronged to local

beaches and prayed for the souls of their loved ones.

Tens of thousands of Indians lost huts in the disaster and rights groups say more than 20,000 tsunami-affected families are still waiting for new homes.

Thailand

In Thailand, orange-robed Buddhist monks gathered by the Andaman Sea for a blessing ceremony in memory of the 5,400 people killed in the kingdom, half of whom were foreign holiday-makers.

About 200 survivors and relatives of victims were invited to Phuket's Patong beach, a popular strip of hotels and restaurants, to lay flowers in the sand. They sat silently and grasped red roses as the monks chanted blessings.

Memorial services were also planned throughout the day in the six southern Thai provinces hit by the tsunami.

Reports from AP, AFP and Reuters



STROLLERS play with a dog in the snow on a sunny winter day near Irschenb



A THAI mourner writes a prayer note next to pictures of victims of the 2004 tsunami during a memorial ceremony in the southern Thai province of Phang Nga.

AFP

FROM THE

Cool definitely has its rewards as PHILIP MORRIS MENTHOL KING SIZE brings you its "Cool Catch" promo!

As a treat to its loyal patrons, PHILIP MORRIS MENTHOL KING SIZE has been turning typical night-outs into a cool and exciting shindig by generously giving away hundreds of APPLE IPOD® Nano 4GB in the metro's coolest hangouts. And there's definitely more being given away!

Just what did the partyphiles do to score one of the 375 Nancos?

These party-heads were just in their usual hangout, enjoying a round of drinks and some stimulating conversation with their friends – and they had no idea of the instant revelry the night had in store for them.

Once spotted showing off their PHILIP MORRIS MENTHOL KING SIZE flip-top box 20's packs, these gimmick bods were approached by eye-catching PHILIP MORRIS MENTHOL KING SIZE Brand Ambassadors and were instantly given a brand new APPLE IPOD® Nano! How cool – not to mention easy – was that?

Government Cigarette smoking is da



ing in southern Germany. Weather forecast predicts continuing cold and dry climate for southern Bavaria.

'07 changed everything ...

From page A1

the form of shrinking glaciers and snow cover. Misery for millions lies just decades away. On current trends, the IPCC said drought, floods, rising sea levels and more violent storms will lead to hunger, disease and homelessness. No country will escape damage.

The IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report provided a jolt of fear that translated into a surge of public awareness—and drought, floods or storms, in North America, Australia, South Asia and Eastern Europe, also played their part.

The Arctic's summer sea ice shrank to its lowest recorded extent. And for the first time in history, ships were for a while able to travel through the Canadian Northwest Passage, the legendary trans-Arctic link between the Pacific and Europe.

Flurry of activities

At the G-8 summit in June, President George W. Bush, facing accusations of indif-

ference, joined other rich countries in vowing to pursue "substantial" cuts in carbon emissions and "seriously consider" Europe's aim of halving this pollution by 2050.

In July, the Live Earth concerts girdling the globe enlisted musicians and actors to a cause that for years had been the lonely fight of greens.

In September, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon nailed climate change to the mast of his tenure by staging an unprecedented summit.

"The time for doubt has passed," Ban said. "What we do about it will define us, our era, and ultimately the global legacy we leave for future generations."

That same week, Bush launched a US initiative gathering 16 countries that together account for around 80 percent of global emissions.

In November, climate change ascended into the pantheon of Nobel issues, as former US Vice President Al Gore and the IPCC were awarded the 2007 peace award.

Bali summit

And in December came the climate meeting in Bali. There, 190 nations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agreed to launch negotiations leading to a new treaty for slashing emissions and helping poor countries most exposed to climate change.

But, with its extraordinary scenes of stonewalling and finger-pointing, the Bali marathon also exposed the inconvenient truth about climate change.

Everyone agrees that climate change is a danger. Indeed, many experts say it is coming upon us much faster and more viciously than was thought possible just a few years ago.

But with trillions of dollars at stake to curb fossil fuel pollution, switch to clean energy and shore up the defenses of developing countries, there is absolutely no agreement as to who should pay the bill.

Should it be the rich countries, which got prosperous by gorging on cheap oil, gas and coal and thus are to blame for today's warming?

Or should it be China and India and other emerging giants that will be responsible for the even greater problems of tomorrow?

Talks for launching talks

Bali was in essence about negotiations for launching negotiations.

For the next two years, while the clock ticks for Earth's climate system, officials will haggle over a treaty of fiendish complexity that may not even see daylight if Bush's successor objects to Kyoto Protocol-style emissions curbs.

Ordinary people may wonder why, if an arsonist has set fire to the town, the local council has chosen to spend the next two years squabbling over a long-term program about how to tackle the blaze.

"We are struggling to keep our heads above water on this issue. The gap between the need for action and political rhetoric is growing," said Bill Hare of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Research near Berlin.

Hare admitted that the failure roused at the very heart of the nation-state basis for planetary governance.

In other words, if the UN system, moving at tortoise pace because of the need for consensus, cannot tackle this urgent global problem, it may not have a future at all.

"Maybe it does raise that question. But we don't have time to solve that problem while simultaneously trying to solve the climate crisis," Hare said. "We have what we have, and have to work with it."

AFP

cool catch

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Warning: dangerous to your health



A POLAR bear mascot and a Greenpeace volunteer picket the Senate building in Manila, asking lawmakers for the immediate enactment of a bill on renewable energy. AFP

The death of Batman

DAVAO BROADCAST JOURNALIST FERNANDO "Batman" Lintuan was shot dead the day before Christmas, in sickeningly familiar manner. An assassin riding tandem with an accomplice on a motorcycle killed the hard-hitting radio commentator at an intersection.

"The method used leaves no doubt that it was a targeted killing of a journalist," a statement from the international journalism watchdog Reporters without Borders noted pointedly.

It is still too early to know who killed Lintuan, but the circumstances did not stop Philippine National Police Director General Arnel Razon from raising the possibility that the Davao Death Squad—a shadowy group of so-called vigilantes who have killed some 500 victims in Davao City since 1998—could be behind the killing. "We are looking at that link. That is one of the angles that we are looking into," Razon said.

Razon has been generous with suggestive but essentially generic statements before (consider, to give just one example, the immediate aftermath of the Glorietta 2 explosion). But Davao Rep. Prospero Nograles, once the majority leader in the House of Representatives, has also pointed a finger at the Death Squad; perhaps there may really be a connection worth looking into.

Lintuan "could [have been killed by the] Davao Death Squad and the usual suspects," Nograles said, without elaborating. To be sure, Nograles is a political rival of Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, who is often linked to the Death Squad. But Duterte, who has denied any such connection, habitually uses language that coyly suggests approval of the killings. In an interview with davaotoday.com in 2005, for example, Duterte redefined the behavior he expects of good citizens: "Why would you be afraid each time I say, 'You criminals are sons of bitches! I'm going to kill all of you!'? If you're afraid, then you must be a criminal." (The interview is available online.)

It is only fair, then, that a mayor who seems to enjoy the "benefits" of a liquidation squad while disclaiming any criminal liability for them should be made to account for the killings that bear down on Davao like a guilt-stricken conscience.

Several enterprising journalists have already written about the grim record of the Death Squad or Duterte's seemingly happy inability to stop it; a comprehensive report by Carlos Conde, for instance, came out in the International Herald Tribune the other year. But the final report, of UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston, now filed with the United Nations, places Davao's problem in clear relief.

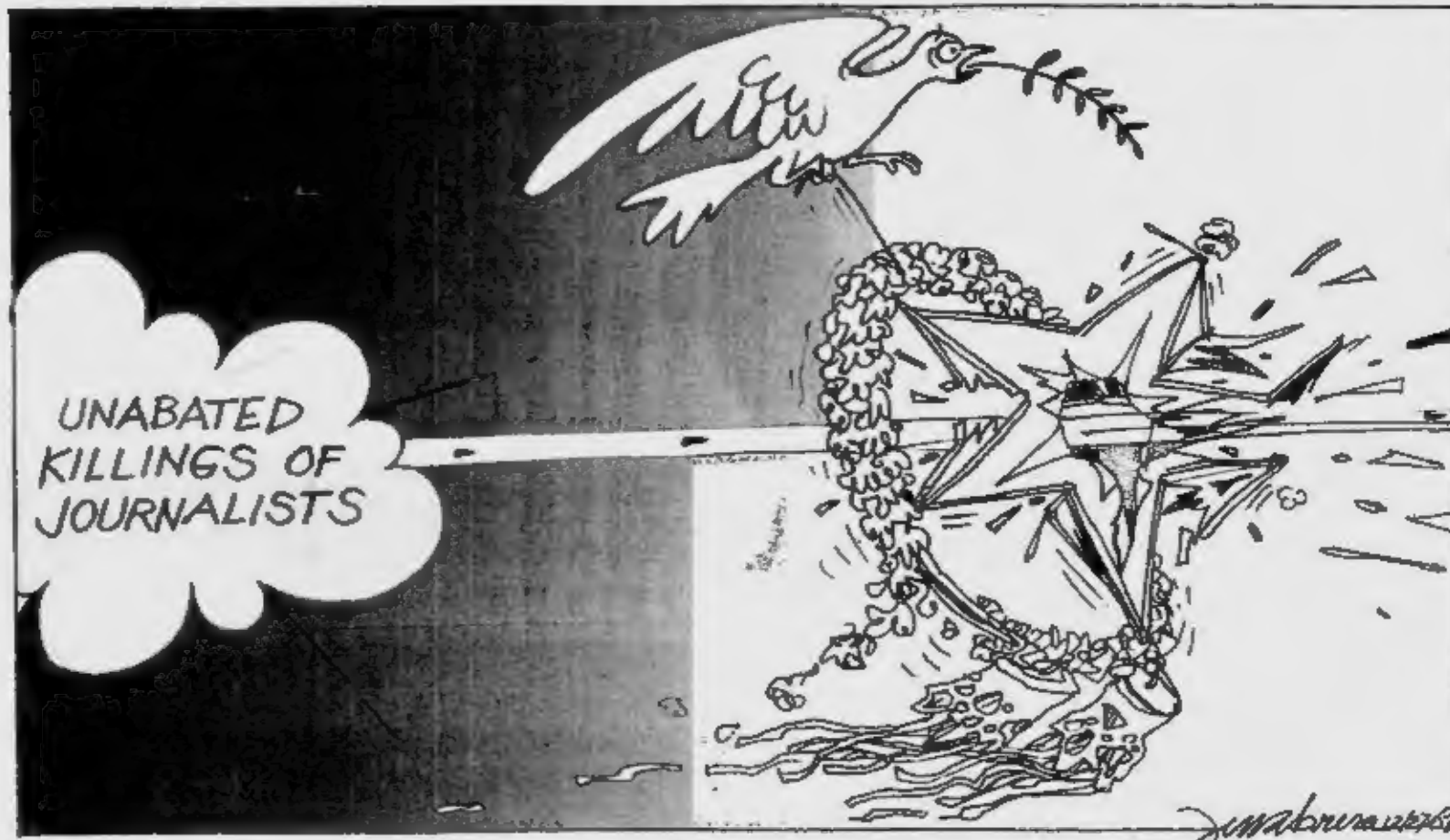
The report devotes only a few paragraphs to the killings in Davao, but together they are a stinging indictment of Duterte and his administration. "It is a commonplace that a death squad known as the 'Davao Death Squad' (DDS) operates in Davao City," the first sentence of the first paragraph reads.

It is not yet clear whether Lintuan's motorcycle-riding assassin wore a mask, but we wouldn't be surprised if he didn't. As Alston noted in his report: "One fact points very strongly to the officially-sanctioned character of these killings: No one involved covered his face."

The authorities, of course, are considering other angles. As Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza, a Davao politician, noted on the day of the assassination, Lintuan had survived an attack by the New People's Army two decades ago. He had also hit hard against illegal loggers, as well as other targets. More recently, however, he also took on City Hall, for its allegedly overpriced "People's Park" project.

His death plunges his four children into the disorienting uncertainty of orphanhood, and refocuses the nation's attention on extrajudicial killings (and the killing of journalists). But it should also, and finally, force Davao's residents, especially those belonging to the middle forces, to demand a thorough investigation of the Death Squad, and to reconsider the costs of willful ignorance.

"By all accounts," Alston wrote, "the mayor has managed to largely insulate his city from the armed conflict and to limit the presence of some kinds of criminal activity. These accomplishments appear to have brought acquiescence in the measures he takes, and the public remains relatively ignorant of the human cost of death squad 'justice.'"



THE "WEDDING RINGS AS VISAS" COLUMN (INQUIRER, 12/21/07) provoked varied comments. Here's one of the self-seeking:

"I'm an old man but still young to do geographic consulting jobs... he he he he. Am serious in helping others who wish to migrate, who really like to improve their way of life... not well-to-do or rich. Could you introduce somebody whom I can bring to the US? Please reply."

Reply: "(Name deleted), re your request for introductions, I regret INQUIRER columnists are banned from moonlighting as Yenta the matchmaker. You'll have to do that yourself."

Gilda Smith who teaches at a US college wrote: "This shows how hard life is in the Philippines. Young Filipinas risk marrying a foreigner whose culture is alien, to free their families from poverty. Most are unprepared."

"I married an American at 47. We met on the internet. Even with my age and getting a master's degree before marriage, it was difficult to adjust. (Some) here think Filipinas marry Americans just to get into the country (and skip once) they have the necessary papers."

"I suggest that a study of Filipinas marrying Americans be conducted. Filipinas marrying foreigners (should) have more preparation for what they are getting into."

The glitter of remittances blur central bank data that document heavy indebtedness of their families, cautions OPW Journalism Consortium's Jeremias Tan of the bank. He cites a BSP poll of 5,087 households (about half in Metro Manila). "Some 469 respondents were OFW households," says Winiceto Tan of the bank.

Laguna fish vendor Clarita Quisel's husband repaid P65,000 for his Qatar trip. Her \$219 monthly remittance has been sapped by loan payments and the strong peso. After covering six children's daily and school needs, "we're still hard up," Quisel said.

Of 469 OFW households, 159 were repaying debts. Only 17.5 percent received remittances enough to pay loans and save. Nine out of these 10 households used remittances for food, etc. Six out of 10 paid for schooling and three for medical expenses.

I GOT A LOT OF GREETINGS FROM WELL-wishers last Christmas Eve calling on blessings and abundance to descend upon me, and I thank them for it. But no one talked about a theme I have been dwelling on for many Christmases now. Completely surprisingly, the one who did so—and put it across in a message to the public in general—was Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales. Completely surprisingly because he was the last person I expected to do it.

Pray for the poor this Christmas, Rosales bid the faithful on Christmas Day. "Our prayer and pleading, like a Christian prayer of hope and peace, is for the poor to be paid more attention to in our Christian country's economy and laws." The reason for doing that was simple, he said. That was how Christ was born.

It's an inspired message, and I agree with it wholeheartedly. The circumstances of Christ's birth are the one thing that has astounded me about the Christmas story, the source for me of its magic, mystery and power. Whether you're Christian or not, whether you're religious or not, you can't help but be bowled over by it.

Here is someone whom the most powerful religion today postulates as its deity born in the most powerless way. As God, Jesus Christ could have chosen to be born a king and have the power to influence whole empires. As God, he could have chosen to be born a priest or spiritual leader and have the force to move men's minds. As God, he could have chosen to be born a merchant or trader and have the riches to get his message across to the ends of the earth.

He did nothing of the sort. He was born not just to the most ordinary of folk but to the poorest of the poor.

So abject and wretched a spectacle did Mary and Joseph present that they were refused entry in the inns of Bethlehem, the innkeepers (rightly) fearing they would not be able to pay for their berth. Thankfully, they espied a shed for animals which they managed to slip into and there Mary gave birth. This was the pit of winter, a desert wind must have been howling

Fallout

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"Slaughter of the birds" (INQUIRER 12/13/07) sparked comments from scientists and officials. But some hunters e-mailed furious abuse. Read Kristofer Antonio:

"You've no right to label us hunters as 'slaughterers of birds.' All of you who are environmentalist 'kano' are hypocrites. You've never even been in a wild forest before... They know 0% of the environment while 100% mental part pang mental health institution (sic). Do they not write about real estate developers? Do they not contribute too much to your so-called 'deforestation and slaughter of birds?'"

"This is about conservation... as well as biodiversity, natural heritage, legacy and ecological balance," wrote Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri. "No endangered species should be hunted or captured except for research or conservation through breeding in captivity."

Zubiri authored the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act (RA 9147). He heads the Philippine Deer Foundation and is executive director of the Philippine Cockatoo Conservation program.

"On top of penalizing poachers, we must stop massive destruction of their habitats," Zubiri wrote. "Killing these birds for self-gratification or amusement is the height of insensitivity."

A debate about hunting morality is futile, Yeb Sano of Wild Birds Club e-mailed. The law (RA 9147) is clear: Killing of any wildlife is illegal save for unmistakable exceptions, such as for use in authorized research or by indigenous communities in their religious rituals and those infected with contagious diseases. He adds:

"Anybody who hunts or kills wildlife that are neither endangered nor threatened still faces legal sanctions... For critical species, the

penalty is 6 to 12 years imprisonment, and/or a fine from P100,000 to P1 million.

"Let's not belabor the point using such terms as 'responsible hunting.' At this crucial era in history, every wildlife species is an endangered species."

We should "rise from name-calling into closer inspection of empirical and anecdotal data," a founding member of the (Wild Bird Club of the Philippines), Mads Bajarias, e-mailed.

The Philippine duck (*Anas luzonica*) is a hunter's favorite. Yet, this species' breeding cycle has not been documented. "It sounds unbelievable but no one has yet photographed a Philippine duck nest in the wild. There is little concrete data to go on."

Studies of congregatory ducks in other countries reveal a threshold number below which their populations die out. "We don't know what this number is for the Philippine duck. Until we have more data, we ought to stop the hunting of Philippine ducks," he added.

What galls about sports hunting here is that no records are kept. "The larger public does not learn anything from our so-called responsible hunters. I've lost count of the times that I have hunters claim they are 'conservationist.' But science cannot proceed effectively on anecdotal evidence alone."

Thus, WBCP created a database, including a website where a "country list" where birders—after thorough checking by a Rareities Committee—submit their field observations, Bajarias said. "This record is the only credible database in the country."

Neither the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, nor Haribon Foundation, nor World Wildlife Fund keeps a country list derived from empirical data.

With this "country list," WBCP seeks to record all verifiable bird encounters, so as to gather credible and accurate data on bird densities and distributions here. This is essential in formulating conservation action.

"Perhaps this is a practice and service that WBCP can share with hunters," he concluded.

Email: juanlmercado@gmail.com

Rich, poor

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

outside, so Mary had to wrap the boy in whatever things she could find in that place that stank of animal leavings. "Manger" is a romantic word to describe the makeshift jumble that swaddled the child. Think of giving birth in a charity ward of a government hospital on Christmas Day and make it worse a hundred times, and you get an idea of how awe-inspiringly miserable those conditions were.

The last time I pointed this out, which was some years ago, an irate reader wrote to assure me I would be consumed by hellfire in the afterlife for saying these things. There was little doubt in her mind heaven would have transformed the Nativity scene into a most beatific one, or at least a reasonably commodious one, light pouring into the manger and angels filling the world with voices not unlike the Vienna Boys Choir. Much like you see in the Belen.

What can I say? To each his (or her) own. I can at least say I did not spend a sleepless night tormented by the thought of my otherworldly circumstances busting the mercury thermometer up (or down).

My point precisely is that that scene has the most sublime things to say the true nature of beauty, wealth and power. I've always thought the concept of "Church of the Poor" was redundant in that sense, or is merely an affirmation of a fundamental truth of Christianity. If Christ's birth means anything at all, it means that the Church he founded, and which bears his name, is, to paraphrase the American Constitution, of, by, and for the poor.

We've often heard it said that we can never see magic, or reach heaven, unless we learn to look at life through the eyes of a child. Well, if

the Christmas story suggests anything, we can also never see real power or reach a state of true plenitude unless we learn to look at life through the eyes of the poor.

We like to think of ourselves as the most resolutely Christian country in Asia, and the Pope no less has praised us for being so, but I don't know that we've really been able to appreciate that fundamental-Christian insight. The miracle of Christ's birth isn't just that he was born, it was that he was born the way he was. We keep forgetting that—no, we keep denying that—in the way we like to depict the Christ Child, or the Sto. Niño, the worship of which is exceedingly popular in this country, as a smooth-skinned WASP (he was a Jew, for Christ sakes) wrapped in regal raiment, parading himself out to the world in pomp and circumstance.

He would say later on that if he was a king, his kingdom was not of this earth. By which many of us would take to mean that his kingdom is to be found in the next life. Not so. It is to be found in this one. The kingdom of God (pun with the brilliant and violent Brazilian movie with that title fully intended) is not of this earth only in the sense that it is not of the physical kind, it is of the spiritual kind. That is where it unfolds in all its, yes, power and glory. I wish I could say that that is something you realize as you get older, but we do not lack for old people with one foot in the grave who still crave physical wealth and power with every thread of their being. And who end up living such utterly destitute and impotent lives.

In fact, it wasn't just Christ who postulated that fundamental truth; Siddhartha and Mohammad did it, too. There is no life without spiritual life—"spiritual life" is a redundant phrase—and the only way to bathe in its luxurious waters is to be stripped of everything, to plunge into those waters stark raving naked. Which is just another way of saying that the only way to be really rich is to be poor, the only way to be really powerful is to be powerless.

But this is Christmas, I have too much hang-over to elaborate. Go figure.

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New access to Spanish aid

THE FUNNIEST CHRISTMAS GREETING I RECEIVED came from a friend, Lt. Col. Erwin Leo Torrelavega, chief of the Second Division Hospital in Tanay, Rizal: "Lechon sana sa mga nais kong ipadala. May hamon at keso de bola pang kasama. Pero ang kalusugan ninyo ay aking inaalala. Kaya pagbati na lang sa text ang pinadadala ko, zero cholesterol pa. Merry X'mas."

I ran into Agriculture Undersecretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat over the holidays and she sounded quite upset about the wholesale condemnation of the 33 legislators who went with President Macapagal-Arroyo during her state visit to Spain. Puyat said many of them worked so hard to help the country obtain various memoranda of agreement with Spain. Since she's with the agriculture department, Puyat cited gains in that sector and acknowledged the participation of Sen. Edgardo Angara and Rep. Abraham Mitra of Palawan, chairs of the agricultural committees of the two chambers of Congress, Sen. Miguel Zubiri, author of the Biofuels Law, Senate foreign relations committee chair Miriam Santiago, Deputy Speaker Amelita Villarosa, Representatives Dato Arroyo, House agricultural vice chair, Mark Enverga, Martin Romualdez and Monica Puentevela. All these legislators, she stressed, joined the agriculture officials, led by Secretary Arthur Yap, in their meetings with the Spanish firm Abengoa Bionergy and the Agencia Española Cooperación Internacional.

Puyat said special mention goes to Mitra, who went a day ahead of the official delegation, paid for his own fare via Thai Airways, to help the government seal the \$200-million investment in Palawan of the Spanish firm Bionor (no, Mitra didn't bring his mother, Cecile Blanco-Mitra, as alleged in some media outlets). A subsidiary of the publicly listed CIE Automotive, Bionor will finance the development of jatropha feedstock production starting in the first quarter of next year, with nursery sites in Narra, Lourdes, Aborlan and Puerto Princesa, as well as the establishment of extraction and distillery plants in the next three years.

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan



Because of the Biofuels Law, Puyat said, two of the biggest investments of Spain became possible. Aside from Bionor's investments, the other deal involves an estimated \$250-million from Abengoa, a Madrid-based bio-ethanol technology company, in cultivating cassava as feedstock and providing the design engineering and machinery supply required for such plantation, and the possibility of establishing bio-ethanol plants in the Philippines. The Philippine Agricultural Development and Commercial Corp. has offered Abengoa 50,000 hectares in Ozamis City for cassava growing.

Puyat subsequently faxed me a list of the memoranda signed by Yap and his counterpart, Minister Elena Espanosa, and other officials, stressing that it's the first time that the DA would be able to access grants from its Spanish counterpart, particularly in agriculture and fisheries (until recently such grants had to be accessed from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Trade). These include P57.2 million in feasibility studies of biofuels and P25 million for blue-fin tuna development; about P70 million for the sustainable management of coastal resources in Bicol and the Caraga region, and the development of a marine culture park in Casiguran, Aurora. The various MOAs, with draw-down of funds scheduled for the coming first quarter, will also provide advanced technologies in crops, fruits and vegetable processing.

One of the most significant MOAs was signed by Yap and Fundacion Codespa, a Spanish development NGO chaired by Crown Prince Felipe. Though Codespa operates in 17 countries around the world, including Vietnam, China

and RE the MOA with RP was its first with a foreign government agency. Moreover, projects in RP are being readied for the possible visit of the Spanish heir to the throne next year. Puyat said the Codespa MOA identified priority areas here such as microfinance for farmers and fisherfolk and technology transfers. Previous Codespa projects here were worth 1.6 million euros, including a business packaging center in Boilo worth 300,000 euros.

A lot of activities have been planned for the year-long celebration of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between France and the Philippines. Lantern makers from Panganga offered to send beautiful parols to light up the Champs Elysees in Paris, from the Arc de Triomphe to the Place de la Concorde, but I understand that the mayor of Paris didn't allow this as it would go against the traditional lighting of the avenue (Paris' loss, definitely). Instead, another venue for the Panganga lanterns is being studied. At the Talmart Gallery near Georges Pompidou Center in Paris, a month-long exhibit, titled "Steady" by Sanlika, a group of Filipino artists in various fields such as fine arts, film, music, etc., opened with 15 recent canvases and three sculptures of minimalist Filipino painter Miguel Salazar, who hails from Calocan and grew up in Quezon City before moving to France. Ambassador to France Jose Abeto Zaid was guest of honor.

The opening night was complemented by the showing of a 40-minute film in French, "Mambabaring sa Paris" (Sorriers Philippines à Paris) by award-winning filmmaker Glenn Cruz, and video installations by two Pinoy artists based in Paris and founding members of Sanlika. Gaston Damag and Sandra Palomar (daughter of our good friend, West Point graduate Gus Palomar and wife Letty). The film was also shown simultaneously at the Magnet Gallery in Kaipunan, Quezon City. To the artists on both sides of the globe, the simultaneous opening was "a concrete and symbolic way to show that after 60 years, relations between France and the Philippines are undeniably solid, steady and very appropriately synchronized."

Finding Christmas

I AM AN ANACHRONISM. I DO NOT KNOW IF I WAS MOVING so fast that I had missed the giant tarpaulin of red and green this Christmas or if I was rather so slow that I had yet to encounter the cold, distinctive breeze of the Yuletide season. Maybe it was the absence of the vines of merry lights that used to hug the walls even of the seemingly paperweight houses I see along busy Commonwealth Avenue; or the silence of the nights punctuated only by the "caroling" of little kids who could not sing the second line of their carols, thanks to the firm "Patawad" which relieved them of having to sing in exchange for a peso or two. As someone who was fortunate enough to have witnessed, as a kid, the splendid displays of blinking lights that invited serenades, I was lost in time. Since they kept saying that it was Christmas, I kept looking around, trying to find the faintest sign of its presence. But it was only last night that I found it.

After spending several hours of fun and nostalgia with some of my former co-tutors in a Christmas party last night, I found Christmas in the symbolic eating together and exchange of gifts. Or so I thought. But on my way home, the Christmas I had found was ebbing out of my system as if an efferent tube was sucking it away. Then, when the jeepney I was riding stopped at a no loading and unloading zone, two girls got on board, with the older girl carrying her sister on one hand and holding a thick wire that skewered several flattened softdrink crowns on the other. The older girl must have been 12 years old, but her emaciated body made her look as small as my youngest brother when he was 4. The other one, I guessed to be about 1-year-old, since she could only utter undistinguishable sounds. They settled comfortably on the aisle as if it was a sanctuary. Then the older girl began singing something that sounded like carol, her voice, already rendered incomprehensible by the endless chatter of some nursing students seated beside me, was being drowned by the roar of the speeding jeepney. The only word I managed to hear was "aginaldo" (gift).

As I had anticipated with some irritation, she began asking coins. Having made it a principle in life never to tolerate mendacity, I was my usual self: the one who weighs the costs and the benefits even of the most mundane actions and doubts what is apparent. Several thoughts rushed through my mind: giving the girls coins might not benefit them at all, for it would create dependency and the wrong belief that in order to survive, they have to place themselves at the mercy of others; their parents might just be waiting at the next jeepney stop to get the money from them and then order them to keep going; they might just be part of a syndicate. These thoughts built a fence that blocked the entry of irrational emotions which I equate with weakness.

Then her bony legs touched my left foot (I was wearing slippers). I was surprised to feel an unusual warmth that directed my eyes into hers. She was not looking at me but at the nursing students who were laughing. She was looking at them with awe. The glint of innocence and desire that I thought I saw broke down the fence I had painstakingly built. I found my hands reaching for some coins in my pocket, all rationality forgotten. I forgave my strong feeling against mendacity or the parents or syndicate members who might be happily waiting for them. All I could see was this girl and her eyes that yearned for something so distant and impossible to achieve.

My coins surely would not have been enough to take her to that distant place, but maybe they would bring her closer to finding her way to it. I gave in. But in losing, I found Christmas. Not in the lights or the songs but in their very absence.

Dianne Margarette T. de Los Reyes, 18, is a fourth year Political Science student at the University of the Philippines in Diliman.

Back-to-Christmas movement

IF I WERE FROM ANOTHER RELIGION OR ANOTHER planet and I knew the Christmas story and how Christianity began, I would be very shocked to see Christmas being celebrated with excessiveness, mindlessness, stressfulness. I would ask: How has Christmas come to this? This was not how it all began.

Simplicity has been supplanted by excess. It seems the Christ in Christmas has been X-ed. Xmas. X for excess. Xmall, Xmess. Oh, we say, but we know Christmas is alive, one just has to wade through the X-cess to find the true essence. But why must this be so?

Toxic toys, double-dead meat, smuggled goods, horrendous traffic, Christmas blues, piles of garbage, overcrowded shopping malls, desperate gift-givers, overeating, excess cholesterol and sugar, clogged airports and bus terminals, the culture of gift and cash solicitation (messengers, garbage collectors, strangers, barangay personnel leaving you envelopes into which you must put in money), and so forth and so on.

These are some of the negatives of the Christmas season that needn't be there. How is it that Christmas is the time when the gap between the rich and the poor becomes wider than wide, with the latter feeling the pain of being on the other side of the rail-road tracks? The lonely get lonelier, the hungry feel hungrier, the outcast feel like castaways indeed.

If Jesus walked the streets and malls incognito to see how his birthday is being celebrated today and to feel the overall mood of the majority, would he be happy? Your guess is as good as mine.

Would he be happy with the churches, institutions and movements that are propagating the Christian faith? Have they fulfilled their role to preach, lead by example and draw people back to where it all began? Have they succeeded in making the Christmas celebration truly meaningful, simple and memorable? Or are they, too, being drawn to the malls?

Masses are now celebrated in malls in order to spare the shoppers and employees an extra trip to their churches. The Catholic churches have con-

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo



ceded to the malls and are wooing back their parishioners in the malls. Worship becomes a side trip, an afterthought. So convenient, like going to a convenience store.

This is a better scenario. It used to be, and it is still the case now in some places, that the vendors and commercial establishments went to the churches' vicinity to ply their trade. Take the case of Baclaran and Quiapo. Here worship and prayer are the church-goers' main purpose, shopping is the side trip. And so the churches there could always say, "We were here first." (It is the local governments' job to put order in the chaos outside the churchyard.)

I am not making a judgment on the spiritual fervor and priorities of the shopper-worshipper or the worshipper-shopper. I am just making an observation. And I am not condemning malls and their role in the economy and the role of advertising in marketing and commerce.

But one can't help wondering if (or feeling sorry that), because of the frenzy to sell and to buy for the Christmas gift-giving, the Christmas story has perhaps simply become a small side story to be told like a fairy tale accompanied by twinkling lights and artificial snow fall and elves and reindeer hurtling across the sky. The wonder and the headiness that such a scene induces are often what remain. Not "Away in a manger no crib for a bed..." and what really happened and why.

The first Christmas needn't have been a stark scenario, what with the angels singing, a bright star shining, wise men bringing gifts and shepherds a-visiting, and heaven and nature singing. Some good and wise women must have come, too. A special birth such as Jesus' was cause for re-

joicing—and also cause for worry for the powers-that-be at that time. Soon it was time to flee.

When you look at the way that birth is being celebrated now, you wonder where the Bethlehem scene is in all the fuss and frenzy.

And there isn't a grand, concerted effort to stop the deterioration of Christmas. There isn't a back-to-Christmas movement of some sort that I know of.

There is the Slow-Food Movement that is meant to counter the unhealthy fast food culture and to bring back the joy of healthy home cooking. There are so many organizations and movements all over the world promoting organically-grown food minus the toxic pesticides. There is back-to-nature, back-to-natural, back-to-basics, back-to-this-and-that, etc., and the people behind these are really walking their talk, living out what they preach in a concerted way and convincing others to do the same.

Is anybody out there bringing up Christmas? I know the churches keep preaching about it. But I have yet to hear of a group or movement with an identity or a name that is going against what Christmas has become.

And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and hea... ven and nature sing! I love that portion from the carol "Joy to the World" because it is inclusive. Jesus came to redeem not only humankind but the whole of creation. Trumpets blare when that portion is sung or played, giving you a heady feeling.

Be kind to nature especially this Christmas and pre-Kind Year season. Let nature sing—not groan—by managing your holiday garbage. Segregate, segregate, segregate. If you can make compost out of your organic waste, so much the better. This would lessen the putrefaction and decay on the sidewalks. Do not burn and add to the pollution. Christmas should also be nature's best moment.

Let's bring back the true essence of Christmas through our lives. Greetings of Joy and Peace to all!

Send feedback to cerespdpd@info.com.ph

Assessing Adrian

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III



government run by Americans was hardly heavenly, what with its colonial economy... and the Filipino people in their place as "hewers of wood and drawers of water." The Army and Navy Club with the sign: "Dogs and Filipinos not allowed." And a cultural brainwashing that left the Filipino with one dream: to be an imitation American.

We must evolve or perish and it was once in the hands of writers that evolution first manifested itself and then, in today's terminology, turned viral. As Leon Ma. Guerrero famously proclaimed him, Rizal was the "first Filipino," while Bonifacio had a different conception of our identity as a nation: "Tagalog" was, for him, not an ethnic group but an entire country struggling to be free. Both used their pens though they differed on the efficacy of using the sword. The foundation of our nationhood, then, is not blood, it's paper; not battles in the field, but the battle of ideas.

The only question, for generations, was which kind of idea would prevail and which exponent would gain the most clout. The Rizalian model was that of the cultivated, shrewd, intellectual armed with a wit and even more biting by a tendency to alienate the less clever; that of Bonifacio, by the trenchant social critics who were self-taught, the autodidacts with a political bent and little affection for the socially advantaged.

The supreme autodidact—the ultimate self-made man, precisely because self-taught—was Adrian Cristobal, who served as an inspiration to all those who live by Oscar Wilde's dictum that education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember that nothing worth knowing can be taught. In a nation where the fetish for formal education makes

someone without a college degree only half a person, Cristobal achieved eminence despite—and perhaps even due to—his lack of a diploma.

Cristobal understood power because he'd worked in such close proximity to its most adept wielders. He wasn't alone in gaining this heady, even corrosive, experience. State patronage of the arts was last taken seriously during the Marcos years, and by the arts we should include the liberal arts, both the ancient and modern meanings of the term, an irony considering the restrictive nature of the New Society Scores of intellectuals were kept on the government payroll, and never before, or since, have so many men and women of brilliance been employed by, and achieved prominence in, the state. For such individuals, there was, for a time, the genuine possibility they could contribute to great things, rather than fleeing to the hills in pursuit of Maoism or abroad to devote their brain power to the improvement of other nations.

A heretical thought, but one that needs exploration, is that Cristobal may not have been so much on the wrong side of history, but instead completely correct because firmly grounded in a complex yet razor-sharp understanding of our society and its needs. The only problem was that the vessel in which he and so many others poured their talents was fatally flawed. After all, even Marcos' bitterest critics said he could have been the greatest leader this country has ever known, if only he hadn't succumbed to advance, practiced nepotism with such enthusiasm, and, finally, had his legendary intellect and will sapped by disease.

Everything that Marcos claimed was the problem, a concerted yet essentially incompetent ruling class, a slavish society devoid of a sense of intrinsic self-worth, a society that required a firm hand to rule it—all continue to be said of ourselves, by ourselves, all the time. Whatever the infinite variation, the central theme continues to be that of the need for a New Society. It was precisely that, but without the Great Dictator, that even Edsa tried to accomplish, and which has been used as an indictment of People Power since.

December dream

Ariel Sebellino

THIS ONE I DON'T HIDE. I LOVE THE MONTH OF DECEMBER and Christmas is my favorite day.

There's something about this month that makes me want to stay in it forever. Perhaps I'm still stuck in my childhood merriment and I don't want it to slip away.

When I was a child, I used to ask my mom to deck the house with Christmas trimmings as soon as the "ber" months began. She always did it, and did it very creatively, and scored this with her all-time favorite Gunter Kallmann Choir record, which I liked better than Ray Conniff's, which she alternately played.

You've probably heard Gunter on the airwaves or inside the malls, and mistook it for Conniff. I could name the song that came next or before their medley which ends with "Hark the Herald."

Mother once warned us, "Loose or misplace any record or album but not Gunter Kallmann." We didn't; the old cassette tape is still with us to this day, now with a CD back-up.

Once I wrote her a letter with an article on Brown and White Christmases. The former represents the ideal Filipino celebration, while the latter is just "cold out there." (My piece was left untouched, but the letter came back edited.) I have since reconciled the difference, if it means not counting the telling signs. I know now why I "happen" to be so alive and frivolous in December or on Christmas: it is because we get together and make our wishes come true after patiently waiting for them to happen all year long.

This is our second Christmas without her. There's a figure missing in our once complete nativity set, the same one that is on a portrait that rests on the console with her infectious smile. I have held back long enough to say that there's a missing piece of love and joy, like an odd puzzle with an unwanted space on it.

"Wherever you are, I will always see you in the lives of your beautiful daughters and your memories will live on through my father." Those were my parting words before a church crowd, prior to her interment in September 2006. I have never parted with her since, just as I have never split with Gunter. It makes me feel more alive, and every Christmas means much more to me than ever before.

There is one song in Gunter's Christmas album that cannot be found in any other album, and it goes: "I see your smiling face in my December dream. I dream of laughter and the songs that you've been singing..."

Mothers make the perfect Christmas, and children are gifts that make mothers make it happen.

As we celebrate the birth of Christ, let us embrace motherhood and childhood once more.

Ariel Sebellino is connected with the Philippine Press Institute. He wished for the publication of this article dedicated to his mother in Youngblood as a bonus for joining the Inquirer's 22nd anniversary treat and sharing "that No. 1 feeling." The names of the 21 other winners will be announced on Jan. 22, 2008.

Overcharging at post offices?

ON NOV. 19, I MAILED AT THE QUEZON City Main Post Office a packet containing a blouse for my daughter in Sydney, Australia. I was charged about P800. I found the amount quite high. It was not the first time I had sent packages to my daughter in Australia, and for those previous ones I was charged much less. The explanation given to me was that the latest packet exceeded by 50 grams the weight range imposed with the P400 fee. That was why I had to be charged the higher rate for the next weight range.

When my daughter received the package, she took note of the cost of mailing as

she was going to reimburse me. She saw that the "metered" stamp was marked the lower rate of about P400.

I have observed that letters and parcels that have been metered are no longer given back to their senders, who are neither given receipts. Instead, the letters and parcels are immediately put in a box inside the receiving postal employee's cubicle. This means that there is no way that a mailer can check if the amount paid is the amount in the "metered" stamp. This is clearly an opportunity for corruption—if it is not already an institutionalized corrupt practice or

modus operandi, as the mailer can be charged more than the amount in the metered stamp and be kept unaware of the "rip-off."

To prevent this, mailers should ask to look at their letters/parcels after these go through the metering machine to make sure that the amount paid is the amount reflected in the metered stamp.

This can be our small contribution in stamping out the problem of corruption.

—ARMANDO BALTAZAR,
coman_baltazar@yahoo.com

GSIS wasting members' money with eCard radio-TV commercials

AS A GSIS MEMBER, I WOULD LIKE TO ask what is the rationale for spending millions of pesos just to advertise the GSIS eCard on TV and radio. The eCard is different from other products that need to be introduced or that consumers have to be repeatedly reminded of.

Does the GSIS management think non-

government employees reached by the commercials will avail themselves of GSIS eCards which are solely for government employees and pensioners? Besides, not all government employees and pensioners tune in to most of the media outlets that run the eCard commercial. Only the stations benefit from the advertisements

in the form of revenues.

I assume that the eCard is compulsory for all government employees and pensioners. An information drive about the eCard, with the government employees as specific target, would be more appropriate.

—SERAFIN GIL,
Apin_357@yahoo.com

Arranza not the expert in Sumilao case

IN THE NEWS ARTICLE TITLED "BIG business on Sumilao: Rule of law not emotion" (INQUIRER, 12/21/07), Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI) president Jesus Arranza said that emotion prevailed over justice in the Sumilao farmers' case.

This is the third time that Arranza has been shooting off his mouth as if he were "the" expert in this controversy. Had he bothered to research the history of the land in question, he would have learned that the disputed property in Sumilao, Bukidnon was originally occupied by the Higaonon farmers, one of the major IP (indigenous peoples) groups in Mindanao.

Unfortunately, Christian settlers encroached on Mindanao and started appropriating huge tracts of land that were the ancestral domains of the IP communities. History puts in question the manner by which Norberto Quisumbing acquired the disputed 144-hectare land: wasn't there a violation of the rights of the IPs to their ancestral areas?

While the land was under dispute, the Quisumbings had no right to sell the land to anybody. Surely, San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI) was aware of the legal status of the land, yet it decided to proceed with the purchase. Presumably, the Quisumbings and SMFI were confident that they could circumvent the law. Fortunately, the rule of law prevailed. Or has it?

Then here comes Arranza ranting about an imagined injustice on behalf of SMFI and Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco. If he wants to know who is really being emotional, he should look into a mirror. Better yet, he should keep his mouth shut over issues that he knows nothing about. He has been trying hard to project a righteous image, but he has only succeeded in convincing everyone else that he is just a flunky of unscrupulous land grabbers.

—OMI ROYANDOYAN,
Centro Saka Inc.,
Rm. 821 PSSC,
Commonwealth Avenue,
Diliman, Quezon City

Lizares Mansion in ASIL

I WRITE TO INCLUDE ADDITIONAL FACTS on the photo "Lights Galore." (INQUIRER, 12/21/07)

The caption of the picture failed to mention that the Lizares Mansion is now the rectory of the Dominican Fathers where the Angelicum School of Lolo (ASIL) chapel is located.

I am among generations of Angelicans who had our First Communion there. To its right is the administration office-annex of St. Albert the Great Hall.

It is also worth mentioning that the façade is first lit up every Christmas season during the annual "Sigaboom" night which is celebrated by the community and alumni.

—EMMA TERESA CARMELA L. APORTADERA,
first year (Sapphire) PSHS-WV Campus,
ASIL (Elementary) 2007

Senior citizen given 9% discount only

I READ RAMON FAROLAN'S COLUMN ON SENIOR citizens' discounts. (INQUIRER, 3/5/07) I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for the information. I had this nasty encounter with a drugstore across the Philippine General Hospital.

One late evening, we had to buy a pain reliever for my grandfather. It was not available at the PGH pharmacy so we chose to buy it just across from the main gate of PGH. However, upon presenting the senior citizen ID of my lolo, the booklet and the form to be filled out by the drugstore, we were told we would be given a 9-percent discount only, per the drugstore's policy. We were astonished; we were expecting to receive the full 20-percent discount mandated by law, especially because the medicine was quite expensive.

Is there a way we can probably raise this issue somewhere? The drugstore's personnel told us that this has been the company's policy despite the law.

—JONEE ZUNEGA,
jonee_zunega@yahoo.com

Would Inquirer still be around in 2010?

CONRADO DE QUIROS COULDN'T HAVE expressed it better—what is prevailing right now among Filipinos is a mood of general "disinterest" in avenues for change. One of the oft-cited reasons for this kind of attitude is the upcoming 2010 elections.

Many are still looking forward to 2010, hoping that it will be different from the previous elections, that it will usher in a period of major changes.

I do believe, I've seen this scenario before. In 1972, when the opposition Liberal Party overwhelmed the ruling Nacionalista Party in the elections, both in the local and Senate contests, there was a "hum" in the air. The next thing was to deliver the proverbial "coup de grâce" in 1973, when Marcos would no longer be eligible for another term.

So focused were people on the 1973 elections that when martial law was declared, many were still caught by surprise and disbelief, including the Left. After the initial chaos and confusion, political paralysis set in, induced by fear as the iron grip of martial law became very, very real.

Are our people so "paralyzed" by illusory optimism that they can't see a possible repeat of September 1972? Or have we been overcome by historical amnesia? What if we all staked our bets on 2010 and the election wouldn't take place? What then? Would I even be reading the Philippine Daily Inquirer come 2010 or thereabouts?

—ADELBERT BATICA,
basaynon49@yahoo.com

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Dec. 26-28	10:00 - 9:00	10:00 - 9:30	10:00 - 9:00	10:00 - 9:00	10:00 - 9:00	10:00 - 9:00
Dec. 29-31	9:00 - 9:00	10:00 - 10:00	10:00 - 10:00	10:00 - 9:00	10:00 - 9:00	10:00 - 9:00
Jan. 1	9:00 - 9:00	9:00 - 9:30	9:00 - 9:30	9:00 - 9:00	10:00 - 9:00	10:00 - 9:00
Jan. 2	11:00 - 9:00	12:00 - 9:00	12:00 - 9:00	12:00 - 9:00	12:00 - 9:00	12:00 - 9:00

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Senate probe of Asean summit deals urged

By Jolene R. Bulambot
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—A CEBUANO BUSINESSMAN IS seeking a Senate blue ribbon committee investigation of alleged anomalous transactions of the 12th Association of Southeast Asian (Asean) summit held here in January.

In a letter, Crisologo Saavedra asked Sen. Panfilo Lacson to sponsor a resolution calling for a Senate inquiry into the alleged irregularities in the implementation of at least P2 billion in Asean summit projects.

The list of alleged scams, he

said, was growing.

He claimed that the construction of the Cebu International Convention Center (CICC), venue for the summit, was overpriced.

Surveillance cameras installed on the routes that the delegates would take were also

overpriced, he said.

Saavedra also asked the investigation of irregularities in several road repair projects that used hundreds of millions of pesos allotted for the summit but which were not Asean-related.

Saavedra said the inquiry would prod senators to pass legislation that would modify and improve Republic Act No. 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Act.

Most of the projects intended for the Asean summit did not go through regular bidding as provided by law, he said.

Saavedra said the legisla-

tors could fill gaps in procurement procedures and introduce measures to prevent abuses by public officials, such as shortcuts in the bidding process.

In his letter to Lacson dated Dec. 12, Saavedra urged the legislators to review the Aguinaldo Doctrine, which is a Supreme Court decision that absolves politicians from any administrative liability committed in previous terms.

He said politicians had abused the Aguinaldo Doctrine, making it an excuse to commit graft and corruption.

He urged a review of the

mandate given to the Office of the Ombudsman, particularly in the disposition of the cases.

Saavedra wrote a similar letter to Senate President Manuel Villar.

"If a presidential candidate wants to win in Cebu, he or she must have these anomalous transactions investigated and send the government officials (concerned) to jail," he said in his letter.

Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez had earlier ordered the Visayas Ombudsman to investigate the alleged Asean summit scams.

Other Ombudsman officials said they had upgraded to criminal and administrative cases against several local and Department of Public Works and Highways officials linked to the overprice of lampposts, streetlights and surveillance cameras.

The Ombudsman is still investigating other Asean projects, such as the installation of decorative street lamps and streetlights.

Its officials are to meet with Commission on Audit personnel to go over an audit that showed irregularities in the Asean summit projects.

Mayor's ears blown off, arm torn as gunmen went for kill

By Frank Cimatu
and Desiree Caluza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—THE KILLERS of Mayor Cesar Rafael of Paracelis, Mt. Province, fired at least 60 bullets into his car that shattered parts of his body.

Residents who saw Rafael's body at the Paracelis District Hospital in Barangay Palitod in the town described what was done to the mayor as a "desecration."

"His eyes and ears were blown off. His arm was almost torn off," a Paracelis resident said through a text message.

"This could only be done by an outsider. Anyone who truly knows the mayor would not have done this," the resident said.

Rafael was driving his Toyota Hilux and had just left his farm in Barangay Palitod in Paracelis when he was attacked between 12 and 1 p.m. on Tuesday, police said.

Signs of planning

Reports said Rafael attended a family gathering in the area on Christmas Day.

Mt. Province Gov. Maximo Dela Cruz said the attack was well planned because the police found ropes and unused bullets near the ambush site. He said reports reaching him showed that at least five men were involved in the attack.

Dela Cruz has asked the police to speed up the investigation of Rafael's murder.

Chief Supt. Eugene Martin, Cordillera police director, and Senior Supt. Joseph Adnol, Mt. Province police director, described the attackers as "merciless."

Intense anger

"Galit na galit (The suspects were seething with anger) Rafael was shot about three to four meters away after coming from his farm. They really wanted him dead," said Martin.

"Based on our initial investigation, mukhang may galit at may paghihiganti kay Mayor Rafael (It seemed the attackers were really angry and wanted to exact revenge on Mayor Rafael)," Adnol told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

Another task force

The police formed "Task Force Mayor Rafael" to investigate the mayor's murder.

Martin said they were looking at several angles in the attack, among them politics, a land dispute and the possibility of involvement of the New People's Army in the murder.

Rafael, a long-time mayor of Paracelis, was recently elected president of the mayors' league of Mt. Province. His daughter, Ana Maria Paz Rafael-Bansag, is mayor of nearby Natonin town.

Attack in bailiwick

Some residents said it was surprising that Rafael would be attacked in Palitod because the village is his bailiwick.

They said Rafael owned a huge tract of land there and had donated his house to be turned into a school in the village.

Paracelis is more than four hours' drive from the capital town of Bontoc. The town shares borders with Isabela, Kalinga and Ifugao.

Rafael was added to the growing list of murdered local officials in the area.

Most of the murders have not been solved.



THE TOWN of Pila, declared by the National Historical Institute as national historical landmark, can also be a playground for school children.

NIÑA CATHERINE CALLEJA

Pila a historical landmark that withstood war, time

PILA, LAGUNA—IT WAS JUST A stone placed at the heart of the town plaza with the words "a town declared a historical landmark" engraved on it.

But the historical marker has become a source of pride for the people here.

Thirty-six structures, including the 200-year-old St. Anthony of Padua Church, a school and a municipal hall, were declared preserved and protected by the National Historical Institute (NHI) on May 17, 2000.

On Dec. 4, former President Fidel Ramos and NHI Executive Director Ludovico Badoy unveiled the marker.

Houses also homes

According to anecdotes, Pila was blessed as American bombers failed to spot it as they were preparing for a bombing run to flush out Japanese soldiers during World War II. Towns near Pila, like Pagsanjan and Sta. Cruz, were reduced to rubble during the bombing run.

Badoy referred to the town as a "jewel of the country" because it is very rare to find a town whose Spanish architectural design was kept intact.

"It would be easy for the younger generation to picture how the houses during the Spanish period look like," he said.

He said houses here are dif-

ferent because people still call them homes.

Pila is the fourth and the latest town declared as a national historical landmark.

The other towns are Vigan in Ilocos Sur, Silay City in Negros Occidental, and Taal in Batangas.

Mayor Wilfredo Quiat said the formal declaration would help attract tourists.

He said since 2001, students have been visiting Pila because it was a requirement in school.

Appointed as the caretaker of the town's heritage and historical landmarks, the Pila Historical Society Foundation Inc., composed mostly of the Relova and Rivera clans, was formed in December 1993.

Don Felizardo Rivera, who donated his lands to the church and municipal government, is the recognized founder of Pila.

He is the ancestor of prominent families in Pila surnamed Rivera, Relova, Agra and Alava.

Good start

Cora Relova, 61, vice president of the foundation, said the group started as a beautification committee but realized that the town is rich in history with artifacts that should be preserved.

She said forming the historical society was initially met with skepticism and resistance from the town council even though the

mayor was their relative.

But the historical society understood where the town council was coming from, Relova said.

"Our perspectives were different. The town council was thinking of meeting the town's immediate needs while (we were) looking forward," she said.

'The town and the memories here bind our families...'

She said they were both right but the foundation believed it is possible to achieve the vision for the town and that this could be accomplished "inch by inch."

Monina Rivera, the foundation's president, said they opposed a yearly fair that fell right smack in the middle of the town's landmarks.

"During and after the town fiesta, there was garbage left behind in the place," she said.

The historical society became successful after several years of lobbying so the town council removed the fair from where the landmarks were.

"You know, it was difficult because many people enjoyed the fair," added Rivera, 68.

Relova said protecting the town's heritage was not an easy task. "Filipinos are not really into heritage and culture unlike the Europeans," she said.

'Ties that bind'

For Relova and Rivera who are cousins, Pila is home they come to every summer vacation, Flores de Mayo, All Soul's Day, and Christmas.

"The town and the memories here bind our families," Rivera said, adding that family reunions are common.

"A house could no longer accommodate us. Usually, we hold it in big places because we sometimes add up to 400 (people)," she said.

Relova said they are advocating for Pila's preservation because of the good memories they had of the place when they were still young.

"We want the image of Pila to be the same as before. We want the children now to experience what we had," she said.

First Tagalog dictionary

She said she is very happy seeing children sitting in the grass in the plaza and reading books.

"This is not just a landmark but a place that people could use," she said.

Aside from the ancestral houses and artifacts found in

the Pila museum, another considered treasure of the town is the first Tagalog-Spanish dictionary titled "Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala."

It was published by renowned printer Tomas Pinpin and Domingo Laog in the second printing press in the Philippines which was built by the Franciscans in Pila, Laguna in 1611.

Relova said they could no longer locate the site of the printing press.

The dictionary, which was 25 years older than the first book published in the United States, was compiled to facilitate the evangelization of the Tagalog region.

According to Relova, it was proof of how rich the language and culture of the Tagalogs were.

For example, *cortar*, a Spanish word that means "to cut" has the equivalent of 47 Tagalog words for every act of cutting.

In the dictionary, Pila was also depicted as a noble town "Perhaps, because of the nobility of the people's tradition here," she said.

The town council is now drafting a resolution to ensure that municipal government officials would help the NHI and the Pila Historical Society Foundation protect and preserve the heritage site. Niña Catherine Calleja, *Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Electric wire thieves won't spare giant 'parol'



CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Somebody played Grinch in this city, considered the country's Christmas capital, by stealing wires in the rotors of four giant lanterns on Christmas Day, fouling up the holiday mood in villages where the lanterns were made.

Because one of its seven rotors was stripped of wires, about 200 meters in length, the lantern of Barangay San Nicolas performed without its white bulbs, according to its designer, Edwin David.

"The people were looking for the white bulbs. They wondered why those did not light up," David told the INQUIRER.

Minus one rotor—the "heart" of any giant lantern—only the

colored bulbs flashed, rendering an incomplete set of designs though, said David.

The rotor is a cylinder made of aluminum connected to an electricity source. The 5,000 bulbs of San Nicolas' lantern are wired to a row of hairpins connected to the rotor.

The bulbs light up or shut off when the rotor is rotated to enable the hairpins to touch the surfaces exposed or covered by masking tapes. The strips of masking tapes on the rotor's surface are based on the play of lights assigned for every design.

With six rotors still working and one disabled, the show nevertheless went on, said David.

"Our villagers were happy,

somehow," he said.

But they did not see the complete glitter and pomp of the lantern that judges in the Giant Lantern Festival on Dec. 15 chose as second runner-up.

The wires from the two rotors of the San Felipe lantern and from one rotor each of the San Juan and Telabastagan lanterns were also stolen.

The San Felipe lantern, designed by Roland Quiambao, placed first runner-up while Telabastagan's entry, made by Arnel Flores, was judged champion in that festival of eight lanterns.

Keeping up with the Catholic tradition, all eight lanterns were displayed during the Christmas Midnight Mass on

Dec. 24 in the city.

"*Sirimba da la* (They attended the Mass)," was how old residents call this practice of queuing the lanterns in front of the Metropolitan Cathedral here. They stood behind the City Hall where the city's police office is also located.

A suspect has been arrested on Wednesday noon.

Supt. Walter Castillejos, city police chief, identified the suspect as Ezequiel Gonzales, a policeman dismissed from service due to supposed involvement in a series of robberies in Angeles City several years ago.

Investigators found similar bundles of wires in his house near the City Hall. *Tonette Oresjas, Inquirer Central Luzon*

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INQUIRER *Southern Luzon*

Albay island villages now get relief

By Jaymee T. Gamil
Bacacay, Albay

WITH ITS WHITE sand shores and marble mountains, Barangay Mataas on Cagraray Island in Bacacay town in Albay is a paradise getaway for any casual tourist.

For the villagers, however, life had not been all sunshine as they struggle against being overlooked by the mainland in development efforts, especially after Super typhoon "Reming" struck last year.

About an hour's boat ride from mainland Bacacay, the village and its remoteness had led to a short supply of resources, particularly for education.

Located at the eastern part of the province, Bacacay is about 20 kilometers from Legazpi City.

For 11 years, Mataas had only one teacher for its entire elementary school. It also only had one concrete classroom and a bamboo hut for about 60 students.

In Reming's aftermath, the hut had to be rebuilt three times to withstand strong winds so that classes could resume, teacher Efren Bino, 37, said.

During this period, damaged boats and turbulent seas cut off the already isolated community

from the aid of local government units.

This was the situation that faced nongovernment organizations, like Plan Philippines, when they identified Mataas as target for relief and rehabilitation last year.

Plan, an international child-centered humanitarian group, constructed the 12 by 16-meter school building now standing where the makeshift-classroom hut used to be.

Designed to be typhoon-resistant, the building is made of materials that can withstand strong winds and are impervious to the corrosive effects of salinity in coastal villages.

"It was also designed to be used as an evacuation center in times of calamities," said Genie Dait, project coordinator for Plan's Albay Disaster Response Program.

Barangay chair Michael Baraquiel recalled how most houses in the village were washed out during Reming.

He expressed gratitude and relief at finally having not only a permanent classroom but also a safe evacuation center for the community. "We're more organized now. It used to be every man for himself during typhoons," he noted.

Least served

Inaccessibility remains a



A TYPHOON-RESISTANT school building and evacuation center now stands where a makeshift-classroom hut used to be in Barangay Mataas in remote Cagraray Island, Bacacay, Albay.



THE REPAIRED school building in Barangay Cawayan makes learning conducive for these pupils.

problem for Albay's island communities, a plight which becomes more glaring in times of disaster.

"The islanders are always the last to be provided aid. When help does arrive, we only get the leftovers from the mainland because they're the priority of LGUs," Baraquiel said in Filipino.

After Reming struck, residents consumed even eating sea-soaked rice grains for weeks since no relief goods were coming in, he recalled.

The situation is more dire in education.

"Until now, I walk to neighboring villages just to ask for school supplies. We also still use the damaged books we were able to retrieve after the typhoon," Bino said.

The village teacher said that although the Mataas Elementary School recently received new textbooks from the government and some NGOs, it still had no books for

some subjects.

The same problem afflicts the elementary school in Barangay Cawayan, about 30 minutes away by boat, on the same island.

Even with newly donated supplies, the Cawayan Elementary School is still left with only one textbook for every six students, school head Isabel Ortiz-Barquilla said.

She was thankful, however, that Plan was able to repair its three-classroom school building.

"It's now more conducive to learning. We didn't have partitions between classrooms before, so classes distracted each other," Barquilla said.

She added that before the building was repaired, the school had never been used as an evacuation center since facilities were so dilapidated and dangerous for fleeing families.

Plan remains one of the few NGOs concentrating relief and rehabilitation efforts to the least served areas in Albay.

"Many NGOs were helping in the mainland, but there was minimal aid reaching the islands," Dait pointed out.

Plan's program areas cover three island communities namely, Cagraray in Bacacay, Batan and Rapu Rapu Islands. The last two islands are under the municipality of Rapu Rapu.

About 25,000 schoolchildren were displaced when 693 classrooms in Bacacay and Rapu Rapu were damaged by Reming.

Plan has reconstructed or repaired 60 of these classrooms, with 26 more projects ongoing, Dait said.

Immediately after the typhoon, relief goods, tents, tarpaulin roofings, school supplies, teaching materials,

chairs, chalkboards and textbooks were distributed to 58 schools in 59 villages in the island communities.

Plan has allocated \$1.2 million for the Albay Disaster Response Program, with each classroom costing about P550,000.

"We reckon that NGOs have provided us more help than the government," Baraquiel said.

At the Cawayan Elementary School, the Department of Education only repaired the roof of another building, retaining old walls and leaving windows and doorways without panes or doors.

The operation already cost about P400,000, Barquilla said.

Rather than simply wait for mainland assistance, the island communities are slowly learning to be self-sufficient.

When Plan rehabilitated the schools, parent-teacher associations pitched in their resources, constructing the comfort rooms at the Cawayan Elementary School and armchairs at the Mataas Elementary School.

Plan also conducted capability-building training sessions. Villagers were taught how to prevent and respond to hazards brought about by natural calamities.

But much still has to be done in rehabilitating the islands.

Agriculture and fishing, the primary means of livelihood of the people, have yet to recover from the devastation, while health services have remained scarce, as hospitals are based only in the mainland.

But for NGOs like Plan, all hope is not lost. "They are like forgotten islands, because help rarely reaches them. But we would like to give hope, especially for the children there," Dait said.



Nokia: Charging Up the Holidays

It was the nightmare before Christmas. You're lost in the middle of last-minute Christmas shopping while waiting for an important call or text message. Suddenly, your phone indicates that it's low batt. You try looking for your charger in your bag but then you remember leaving it at home. At that moment, you also realize that if even you did have your charger, you still would end up begging for a place to charge up since most establishments are not eager to share their electrical sockets.

Nokia knows that this nightmare is in-

deed an everyday reality. To address this glaring and ever-present need, it introduced a special service only here in the Philippines. As a holiday treat, Nokia came up with the Nokia Charging Station project to give back to its loyal users by keeping them charged up and connected.

The mobile

phone giant has installed over 200 Nokia Charging Stations in places where people are always on-the-go. Now everyone with a Nokia phone can charge up for free at selected Ayala Cinemas, KFC outlets, Nokia Stores, Nokia Care Centers, Smart Wireless Centers, and Wendy's branches.

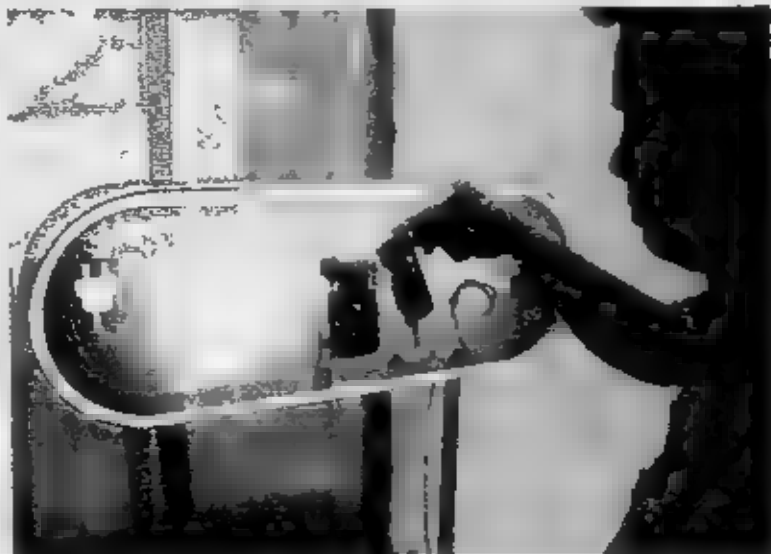
Initial reception of the Nokia charging stations has been extremely encouraging. Those who have experienced its convenience consider it a lifesaver and seek it out whenever their battery meters run low.

"It's very helpful, especially for people like me who are always on the road. Like yesterday, I went to Wendy's to charge up my phone and eat something while waiting," says Alex Betonio.

"I was in Greenbelt 3 cinema and my phone's battery was almost totally drained. Good thing there was a charging station so I was able to charge up and receive an important call from my mom," adds Abby Espiritu.

The innovative mobile phone company plans to install more charging stations nationwide and team up with more partners. Soon, more people may charge up their mobile phones while enjoying their favorite cafes and restaurants. The idea of being cut off from the rest of the world because of a dead battery may even be relegated to the ghost of Christmas past.

Staying connected. Now, that's a gift worth having.



The 2008 Mercury Drug Coupon Calendar

As a token of gratitude to its millions of patrons, Mercury Drug have once again came-out with its 2008 edition of the Coupon Calendar.

In cooperation with the Department of Tourism, the 2008 calendar features photographs of some of the unique Philippine Festivals and gives information about the different colorful festivals held each year in our country. This is the company's contribution of supporting and promoting local tourism.

As in the previous years, the calendar has a 365 days tracking, discount coupons for medicines and health care products that the customers can use to avail big savings whenever they make a purchase at any Mercury Drug store nationwide.

For 63 years now, Mercury Drug has lived-up to its corporate slogan of providing its customers with fresh and reliable medicines at reasonable prices. They have also been headstrong in its goals of giving the best customer service and maintaining its identity as the leading Filipino drugstore committed to the care of the health of the entire nation.



Probers see Abra politics behind blast

From page A1

Pumecha said police were still gathering evidence at the Lunas' compound to determine what type of device exploded there.

But Chief Supt. Eugene Martin, Cordillera police director, said the explosion could have been triggered either by firecrackers that the family would

use on New Year's Eve or by political rivalry.

Martin said that Luna, a former Lagayan mayor, had filed attempted murder charges against "some Abra political personalities" in 2005.

He also said Luna's Mitsubishi Pajero van was riddled with bullets in Lagayan during the campaign for the hotly contested Abra congressional seat

in the May election. Luna was not in the vehicle but six of her supporters, including her cousin, were killed in the attack.

Bayongasan said Luna was with some of her grandchildren in her living room when the explosion occurred yesterday. She was taken to a safe house immediately after the explosion, Pumecha said.

He said the victims were taken to the PV Seares Hospital here for treatment on Tuesday night. The Luna brothers were reported later yesterday to have been transferred to a hospital in Metro Manila.

Dr. Robert Seares, Luna's cousin and the victims' attending doctor, said Ryan Luna, president of the Association of Barangay Captains in

Bangued, suffered second-degree burns.

Damage

Seares said the victims also suffered from wounds caused by bamboo splinters, which he described as similar to broken pieces of barbecue sticks. He said the explosion damaged the garage's roof and some vehicles parked outside the house.

He said Luna did not want to speculate on the cause of the blast and would wait until the police had completed their investigation.

The former Abra congressman, Luis Bersamin, whose family is a close ally of Luna, was gunned down outside a church in Quezon City in December last year after attending a wedding.



PHILIPPINE Postal Corp. office at Liwasang Bonifacio, Manila: Its P5.7-billion automation project in 2008 aims to interconnect roughly 2,500 post offices nationwide through the Internet.

EDWIN MACASIAS

Carcasses of telecoms glitches litter RP scene

From page A1

decade ago, until the dotcom bubble brought the country into broadband connectivity with the rest of the world.

Today, more than half of the Philippine population uses cell phones, says one independent study. The number of users is estimated to reach 53 million by year's end.

Exchanging SMS and e-mails is the norm, not the telegram.

That was why neophyte Sen Francis Escudero scratched his head during a recent budget hearing and asked why Telof needed an outlay for bicycle maintenance at a fabulous rate of P20 a month.

The name of the game

In the boondocks, Escudero was politely told, the name of the game is still the one conjured by Morse, a professor of arts and design at New York University whose work gave birth to the telegram that remains to this day the best way the dirt-poor Filipino communicates.

But as the nation begins to think electronic-commerce and bring the wonders of information technology down to remotest barangays, the conundrum of the telegram weighs heavily on the mind.

Created in 1947 as the Bureau of Telecommunications, popularly known as Butel, and renamed in 1987, Telof's mission is to modernize and provide "adequate, efficient, reliable and affordable telecommunications services particularly in the unserved and underserved areas."

It has not happened and Telof, which used to be under the Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) under the Office of the President before it was transferred to the DOTC early this year, is throwing in the towel.

There are plans to shut down and sell its remaining services, like delivering telegrams.

The concern is that no private company wants to go into an enterprise that does not make money.

Sunset agency

"Telof was seen as a sunset agency when the Telecommunications Act was implemented," concedes Lorenzo Formoso, transportation assistant secretary in charge of Telof, referring to a 1995 law that liberalized the industry.

Private telecommunications companies were allowed to flourish and serve the general public, mostly the urban areas; Telof remained in regions regarded as commercially unprofitable.

Because Telof is not a government corporation, it is constrained from operating a service for profit.

"What happens is that the DOTC does a project and turns it over to us but there is no corresponding budget to implement it," says Formoso.

But critics say that if Telof has become archaic, it is because its management has been inefficient. It has failed to respond to the rapid changes in technology and its equipment has become obsolete and impossible to maintain because spare parts are no longer available.

Bureaucracy-related woes

"Part of the problem is structural and bureaucracy-related," says a study conducted

by Raul V. Fabella and Emmanuel S. de Jesus of the University of the Philippines' School of Economics.

"Perennially plagued by deficits and shrinking infrastructure budgets, the government through the years has not found it useful to devote enough money and attention to elaborating its infrastructure plans beyond broad sketches."

"Little money is typically allotted to do full-blown and independent feasibility studies and detailed long-term plans, while the bureaucracy's capacity to evaluate proposals based on state-of-the-art criteria and global standards is almost nonexistent."

Government track record in modernizing its own telecommunications facilities has been dismal.

31 IT projects

To date, the Arroyo administration has either in operation or in the pipeline 31 information technology projects worth a mind-boggling P2 trillion, mostly foreign funded.

Some of these projects had been set up, but failed to do what they were supposed to and folded up, but the loans are still being paid.

One of the most notable failures, apart from the Telof operation, is the disastrous Telepono sa Barangay (TSB) envisioned to provide phone connections to far-flung villages in Mindanao, parts of the Visayas and the Cordillera and Sierra Madre mountain ranges on Luzon.

The P60-billion project has been shelved. Millions worth of equipment and telephone receivers are rusting away in two Telof warehouses. Embarrassed DOTC officials decline to talk about their condition or what should be done to the stockpile.

The CICT talks with candor of another fiasco, the P781-million global maritime and safety system. Begun in 1998, it was shelved in 2000 with only 70.29 percent of the project accomplished. No reason was given in the CICT website other than that renegotiation fell apart.

"Contractor unilaterally suspended the project," the CICT says. It says communications equipment in container vans have deteriorated due to long exposure to sunlight.

Walls of buildings in the network across the country, along with steel doors and windows, fuel tanks, perimeter lights and fences are now in "a state of deterioration due to lack of maintenance," it says.

Parts of the antenna system, manhole steel covers and grounding wires have been stolen, the CICT says.

Result of kickbacks

An IT executive says the conditions mentioned in the CICT report are symptomatic of what is wrong in these government initiatives. "Because of kickbacks, little margin is left for maintenance and upgrading," he says, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Telof's agony may be mercifully over. It is being eyed for privatization, revealed in a Senate inquiry this year.

Media spotlight centered on Telof this year, when the government hammered out in April, ostensibly out of the blue, a \$329-million deal with China's ZTE Corp., to wire electronically the nation's bureaucracy down to the isolated barangays.

Allegations of overprice and bribery involving Palace cronies and First Gentleman

Jose Miguel Arroyo forced President Macapagal-Arroyo to scratch the China deal in September amid a Senate inquiry.

Broadband in back burner

The broadband project is not in the scrap heap, it is just in the back burner as Telof goes back to the drawing boards.

The CICT admits that private telecommunications firms have overtaken Telof.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. Smart, Globe Telecom Inc., Digital Telecommunications Philippines Inc., and Bayan Telecommunications Inc. cover about 98 percent of the country, with a combination of fixed line, cellular and Internet services.

Satellite services span the entire country but only institutional clients avail themselves of this because it is very expensive.

Formoso, a former CICT commissioner, dismisses the contention that the agency could not keep up with the private sector. He says that if Telof seems to lack flexibility in its operations, it is because it does not get the proper wherewithal from Congress.

Shrinking budget

"Our budget is actually shrinking every year and we transmit all our revenues to government because we are not a government corporation," he explains.

Despite the problems, Formoso insists that Telof must continue to operate in so-called missionary areas.

"Like in certain parts of Zamboanga and basically Mindanao, because there are certain areas where there are no local telcos. Even the commercial money remittance services are not there. In fact, many areas have no post office, even in those areas where we have a presence," he says.

"The Telecommunication Act speaks of a situation where government can no longer compete with the private sector. But what about the unserved and underserved areas?" he asks.

Formoso says the government is not better off abolishing Telof, mainly because the service coverage of the private sector is not wide enough to guarantee the provision of the basic communications service in the rural areas.

Humanitarian intervention

He says Telof's telegraph service fills the communication gap for low-income people who cannot afford to own a telephone. He also fears that the government will lose all its rational basis to pursue telecommunications-related developmental projects, like e-Centers.

"We're trying to refocus the agency to go hand in hand with modern technology. That's why we submitted the rationalization plan to the DOTC."

The department, says Formoso, is talking to private telephone companies and is asking them to bid next year for the government's connectivity needs.

Preferably, bids should include some plan for using Telof's existing backbone and trimmed-down staff, which will number 2,500 by then from 4,000 now. If that happens people in remote areas will use digital telecommunications services instead of the telegrams.

Otherwise, humanitarian intervention may be the solution, like asking the French-based Telecoms Sans Frontières, to serve the rural folk. (To be continued tomorrow)

Automation to bring joy to letter writers

From page A1

miles away via "snail mail."

Never mind if the greeting cards and letters do not reach their destinations on time. A loving touch is what's important, Ferrer says.

The appeal of sending mail the traditional way has remained with Ferrer despite the unpleasant reputation of the country's postal system and the advent of electronic mail and mobile phones that could send messages in the wink of an eye.

"I want to send my friends personalized cards with pictures and my drawings in them and the idea of putting stamps still excites me," the Nueva Ecija lass says.

But such feeling of delight, familiar in the prewar years, has been lost in this cyber age.

Public trust in the postal system has also deteriorated due to "allegations of corruption, inefficiency, thievery, pilfering and nondelivery (of mails and parcels)," admits Postmaster General Hector Villanueva.

From 5 billion letters sent annually through Philippine Postal Corp. (Philpost) a decade ago, the figure is now down to 290 million.

However, there is a silver lining for Philpost with the implementation of the P5.7-billion automation project next year, which aims to interconnect its roughly 2,500 post offices across the country via the Internet, Villanueva told the INQUIRER.

Less thievery

"Public trust and confidence will come with it because it's all electronic. There will be no more human intervention so there would be less thievery and pilfering," Villanueva says.

The computerization project is a nine-year contract with the Japanese software firm, Renaissance of Age, which will operate under a build-lease-transfer scheme.

Under the scheme, while the government corporation is spared from shelling out money, the Japanese company will take a 72-percent share in Philpost's revenue generated by the automation until the contract expires.

Once the project is implemented, Villanueva said that tracking down parcels and even ordinary mail will no longer be likened to a "search for a needle in a haystack."

At present, letters stockpiled in post offices are transported to and from big cities and far-flung villages without being recorded so the chances of tracking them are almost zilch, he says.

Bar codes

The computerization of the entire postal system will see to it that all packages, including P7 worth of mail, will be bar-coded, allowing the sender to check whether what had been mailed had reached its destination and, if not, where it had fallen through the cracks.

"It would be easier for us to monitor all these incoming letters and identify which letters disappeared, were pilfered, tampered and undelivered," Villanueva says.

"We can also interconnect right away with our branches in regions if we want to trace or send money orders."

Currently, Philpost sends money orders through the mail—another factor why senders turn to big-time money

remittance firms to do the job.

Villanueva concedes that the post office could only minimize, not totally eliminate, theft. He puts the blame on the lack of deposit-taking outlets in the countryside that could capture dollar remittances of overseas Filipino workers.

Banks intimidate OFWs

He says many OFWs are intimidated by banks because too many requisites are imposed on them upon opening a savings account. Aside from a minimum deposit requirement, pertinent documents and identification cards are demanded from them, he adds.

"But many of our OFWs are not perfectly documented and they don't want to expose themselves so they take the risk of sending money to their relatives through letters," Villanueva says.

He says cases of missing letters have decreased but will not be eliminated "as long as OFWs send money through letters."

"There's so much money flowing through the mail so the temptation [of theft] is great," he adds.

However, Philpost expects that once it has rolled out its automation program, it could gradually convert its post offices scattered across the country into deposit-taking branches.

Postal Savings Bank

In 1906, Postal Savings Bank (PSB) was a division of the Philpost—then the Bureau of Post—which allowed it to bring banking services to the countryside.

But 50 years later, its operations deteriorated due to the emergence of the private banking sector and the shift of its clients to the latter because they were offered higher interest on savings deposits.

In 1973, the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos issued a directive barring the establishment of PSB branches in places where banking services were already available.

Villanueva says Marcos stopped the post office from performing such function as it became a threat to commercial banks owned by his cronies.

The PSB was reopened only in July 1994 by then President Fidel V. Ramos as a wholly owned subsidiary of Philpost.

Villanueva notes that currently, there are only 22 PSB branches throughout the country—most of them in cities.

Opening accounts with stamps

"Once we are fully computerized, we could convert our nearly 2,500 post offices into savings bank branches as well as into remittance hubs that could serve also the countryside, which is our strength," he adds.

Stamps, he says, would be honored again in opening an account, which even schoolchildren and the ordinary housemakers could avail themselves of.

Villanueva is optimistic that the automation project will double the P3.5-billion gross revenue (P2 billion from stamps and P1 billion from money orders) the corporation earns yearly.

"Once we are wired, we will be able to gradually restore the confidence and trust of our people and we can be in the thick of competition for the remittance and money order business," he says.

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DNA test results in Palma case 'inconclusive'

By Tina G. Santos

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION has sought the help of experts from the University of the Philippines in identifying a young girl whose body was found inside a suitcase in Tondo, Manila, last August.

The bureau earlier exhumed the victim's body for DNA testing but Edmund Arugay, NBI deputy director for technical services, said that the sample specimen taken were considered degraded, having been contaminated with formaldehyde. As a result, initial test results were "inconclusive," he added.

"A joint DNA examination will be conducted this time by the bureau and the UP National Sciences and Research Institute," Arugay said.

Dr. Renato Bautista of the NBI medico-legal division said the victim's bone sample will be taken to the UP NSRI "for processing."

"The UP NSRI will be in charge of processing the specimen sample but the NBI will take care of the analysis and examination of the product or the processed specimen," Bautista said. "We hope that through this, we will be able to finally confirm or negate the identity of the victim."

The body is believed to be that of Geraldine Palma, 7, who disappeared with her nanny in Pasig City last August. Geraldine, the girl's father, told the police that a man had called him up to demand ransom right after his daughter's disappearance.

When the body of a young girl was found in a suitcase a few days later, Palma's parents came forward and identified the body as that of their daughter.

Chief Insp. Alejandro Yanquiling, then head of the Manila Police District homicide division, however, expressed doubt because the victim was taller than what was indicated in Palma's school records.

Bautista, meanwhile, ruled out the possibility that the body was that of Jessalyn Salvatierra, a 12-year-old girl from Tondo, who disappeared at about the same time as Palma.

He said that based on the dental test conducted on the body, the victim was only 7 years old.

Pasig teachers ask DepEd to fire principal

By Kristine L. Alave

TEACHERS OF A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL in Pasig City have asked the Department of Education to relieve their principal, saying she has been abusive and disrespectful toward them and the students.

The complaint against Nenita Villamarin was signed by 140 out of the 150 teachers of the Pinagbuhatan High School which has 6,000 students.

Villamarin has been the school principal for six years.

According to Valeriano Enriquez, head of the PNHS faculty, they decided to file a formal complaint against Villamarin after she berated one of their colleagues so loudly that the latter suffered temporary loss of hearing.

Enriquez added that Villamarin has a temper and a habit of yelling and hurling insults at teachers even for little or no apparent reason.

"She should be removed from here. She should not be allowed to handle people," he said.

The principal, meanwhile, denied the allegations leveled against her by her teachers.

In a phone interview, Villamarin said that the accusations "were not true," adding that she found them "ridiculous."

When pressed to elaborate on her statement, Villamarin refused, saying she does not want to comment further as the case has already been sent to the DepEd.

DID YOU KNOW

ON JULY 11, 1974, Presidential Decree No. 505 created the Philippine Ports Authority and mandated it to manage the country's ports. It was initially attached to the Ministry of Public Works and Highways but later became an attached agency of the Department of Transportation and Communications. In 1987, Executive Order No. 159 gave the PPA the authority to undertake all port construction projects under its port system and granted it financial autonomy. The PPA main office is in Port Area, Manila.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research



THE DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

A man sleeps soundly in Rizal Park a day after Christmas Day, oblivious to promenaders and the trash they leave.

RAFFY LERMA

P7,000 bonus for Metro cops

PNP starts distributing monetary incentive to personnel

By Alcuin Papa

POLICEMEN IN METRO MANILA HAVE REASON TO celebrate as the Philippine National Police yesterday started distributing a performance bonus of P7,000 to its men nationwide.

PNP spokesperson Chief Supt. Samuel Pagdilao Jr. said they expect to finish distributing the monetary incentive by Friday.

He added that liaison officers of the regional police offices and support units have already been called to Camp Crame to collect the checks for their men.

Exempted from the bonus are policemen who have either been suspended or are facing cases, Pagdilao said.

President Macapagal Arroyo earlier announced a P10,000 performance bonus for government workers who have served for at least four months as of Nov. 30.

Of the P10,000, P7,000 would come from the Department of Budget and Management while the rest would come from the savings of the govern-

ment agency the worker is assigned to.

According to Pagdilao, the PNP was not able to augment the national government's allocation of P7,000.

"Unfortunately, the PNP had non-programmed activities and expenditures," he explained.

Pagdilao added that all police personnel had already received their 13th month pay in two installments. The first was given in July and the rest earlier this month.

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Gordon-Garcia tandem 'electable'

RICHARD GORDON AND GWEN dilyn Garcia would make an excellent tandem in the 2010 presidential election.

The senator from Olongapo and the Cebu governor are sure winners—if they have the money.

Yes, Gordon is not in the surveys of possible presidential candidates at this time, but a lot of things can happen between now and 2010.

People who want order and discipline for the country—a prerequisite for economic progress—will vote for him.

After all, it was Gordon who taught Pinoy they were capable of discipline

when drivers and motorists followed traffic rules at the Subic Bay Freeport complex during his term as head of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority.

As for Garcia, she's much prettier than Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo who was elected vice president in 1998. Garcia will win votes among the

star-struck electorate because she is prettier than some Filipino actresses.

The Gordon-Garcia tandem's biggest hitch is that it might run on the administration ticket. In which case, they would lose because people hate President Gloria like the plague.

This was evident in the last election when the administration ticket was trounced. Even the supposedly "sure winner," popular actor, Cesar Montano, didn't win.

If Gordon and Garcia are serious about running in 2010 they should start dissociating themselves from the President.

A few years ago, Multinational Telecom Investors or Mutei became the byword for large-scale syndicated estafa, a company through which Rosario

"Rose" Baladajay and her co-conspirators misappropriated billions of pesos of investors' money.

The modus operandi was a classical "pyramiding" or "Ponzi scheme." Systematic and continuous solicitation of funds from the public with a promise of high returns.

The first batch of investors would be paid off by the next batch's investments, and the system worked—until they ran out of investors.

Recently, another pyramiding scam spearheaded by a certain Bernie de Venecia has reportedly been soliciting millions of pesos to finance the activities of his company, German Asia Tech Pacific, a corporation dealing in petroleum products.

Unsuspecting investors were promised huge interests of as high as 15 percent a month.

Late this year, the pyramid crashed. It was discovered that the invested money had suddenly disappeared and had allegedly been stashed away.

Gas explosion in laundry shop leaves worker hurt

By Jeannette I. Andrade

AN EXPLOSION REPORTEDLY CAUSED BY a leaking liquefied petroleum gas tank ripped through a laundry shop in Quezon City yesterday, leaving a woman injured and damaging two vehicles.

The blast, police said, occurred after Venus Villamor, 35, an employee of the BG Laundry Place on Kamias Road, Barangay East Kamias, turned on the LPG-powered clothes dryer inside the shop at 8.30 a.m.

The explosion blew out the establishment's door and glass windows, scattering debris some 40 meters away. The impact also damaged two vehicles, a black Honda CRV and a Toyota Hi-ace, that were passing in front of the shop at the time of the blast.

A fire immediately broke out after the in-

cident but it was quickly put out by firemen who rushed to the scene.

Villamor suffered third degree burns on the face, neck, arms and legs. Despite her injuries, she was able to flag down a taxi cab which took her to a nearby hospital.

She told the police that when she opened the laundry shop yesterday morning, she had smelled gas but did not think anything of it.

"The shop was closed for two days prior to the explosion. The fumes may have accumulated inside the establishment during that period from an undetected hole in the LPG tank line and the blast was set off minutes after the dryer was turned on," Insp. Arnulfo Franco, head of the Quezon City Police District's Explosives and Ordnance Division, told the INQUIRER.

He added in an LPG tank explosion, the impact usually only destroys light materials. "The blast destroyed the ceiling, glass windows and door, and burned some of the clothes inside the shop," Franco said.

PO2 Joseph Dino of the QCPD Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit said that according to Villamor, she had smelled gas fumes as soon as she opened the shop at around 8.20 a.m. but chose to ignore it.

"She (Villamor) fortunately went to the backroom after turning on the washing machine and the dryer which shielded her from the brunt of the explosion," Dino said, pointing out that the powerful blast could have killed the worker instantly had she stayed in the room where the dryer was located.

The probe of the blast was turned over to arson investigators of the Bureau of Fire Protection after the police determined that it was accidental.

Thieves make off with P200,000

TWO MOTORCYCLE-RIDING robbers held up two businesswomen of almost P200,000 worth of cash and jewelry in Sampaloc, Manila, yesterday afternoon. Maria Luznel and Elizabeth Canson told the police that they were on a Toyota RAV 4 cruising on the corner of Mace-da and Florentino Streets at around 2 p.m. when two men on board a motorcycle without a license plate blocked their path. SPO2 Jesus Victorino of the España police community precinct said the victims told him the men, who were armed with .45 pistols, fired upon their vehicle, forced open the doors and then took the P20,000 in cash and \$4,000 worth of assorted jewelry they were carrying.


Tina G. Santos

Woman killed in fire

A 22-YEAR-OLD woman was killed yesterday when she was trapped inside her burning house in Parañaque City. Authorities were able to identify the victim, Mary Jane Magtanao, with the help of her parents, Crisostomo and Editha. The fire that broke out at the Magtanao's home at Bldg. 5, Lot 25, Seaside Square in Barangay Tamboro was reportedly caused by a lit cigarette. Damage to property was placed at around P100,000.

Julia M. Aurelio

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THE POWER TO LEAD

UAAP-NCAA merger eyed

By June Navarro

ONE LEAGUE TO UNITE THEM ALL

A grand plan to merge the UAAP and the NCAA into one big athletic package next year has taken shape after the concept drew a favorable response from next year's host of the country's top two collegiate leagues.

BAP-Samahang Basketball ng Pilipinas executive director Patrick Gregorio is spearheading the proposed merger after holding exploratory talks with top officials of the University of the Philippines and NCAA school Mapua.

UP which is celebrating its 100th anniversary beginning next month, will host the 2008 UAAP season while Mapua will be the host school of the NCAA. "We want something exciting, dra-

matic and uniquely radical for the UP centennial," said Gregorio, an alumnus of the State-owned university, yesterday.

If he succeeds in bringing the UAAP and NCAA schools under one roof, the tournament will be known as the UAAP-NCAA Centennial Cup.

Gregorio said he would present a concept paper on the UAAP-NCAA merger early next month to UP president Emerlinda Roman, UP chancellor Sergio Cao and Mapua president Rey Vea, who also happens to be a member of the UP alumni association. If he gets the nod of the UAAP board



GREGORIO

and NCAA management committee, Gregorio said an ad hoc committee, whose chief task is to oversee the affairs and interests of the UAAP-NCAA merger, will be formed.

"This is a mega event that has never happened before and it will definitely prove beneficial for the schools," said Gregorio, who has the full backing of BAP-SBP president Manny V Pangilinan.

"This is probably one legacy the SBP will leave under the term of Mr. Pangilinan," added Gregorio.

Gregorio has already asked Philippine Basketball Association operations

chief Riddie Santos to draw up a variety of league formats from which the officials of both league will choose from for the initial tournament.

Besides UP, Ateneo, De La Salle, University of Santo Tomas, University of the East, National University, Adamson and Far Eastern University form the UAAP.

The NCAA has San Beda College, San Sebastian College, Letran, Mapua, Jose Rizal, Perpetual and Philippine Christian University under its wings.

"Imagine these schools fighting it out for one prestigious trophy," said Gregorio. "As long as the intention is sincere, I know it can be done."

La Salle is the defending UAAP champion while San Beda is the reigning NCAA titlist.

Tipon takes long, winding road to redemption

By Dennis U. Eroa
Inquirer Libre

FOR AN AMATEUR BOXER WHO flirted with retirement after a string of disgraceful losses, redemption can be found at the apex of competition. The Olympics.

But the road there is fraught with hardships.

Joan Tipon knows that. But he's not letting it stop him from trying to get there.

Tipon, whose gold medal during the 2006 Doha Asian Games dazzled the country, takes what is probably his last shot at his first Olympics—and the redemption that goes with representing the country in the quadrennial meet—when he competes in the First Asian Olympic qualifying slated next month in Bangkok, Thailand.

Though there is no official lineup yet, Tipon remains the country's best bet in his division and his return to action after not being fielded in the 24th Southeast Asian Games is expected in Bangkok.

"I'm ready to make amends," said the 25-year-old Tipon in Filipino after a workout yesterday at the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines (Aabap) gym.

List of failures

The list of failures he has to atone for reads like red-letter days in a boxing calendar: A world championships, a grand prix, a national open and a well-publicized dual meet.

He flopped in the World Boxing Championships last November in Chicago, Illinois, losing in the first round to Thai rival Worapoj Petchkoom.

"I was stiff in Chicago which was made worse by the biting-cold weather," said the father of two. "No excuses, I lost."

The alarming loss of form actually started during the Ostrava Grand Prix in the Czech Republic where he managed to win the silver medal after making it to the finals without throwing a

punch due to lack of entries.

Despite getting a dressing down from coaches Pat Gaspi and Ronald Chavez, Tipon turned from bad to worse as he failed to control his appetite and fought as a featherweight, three kilos heavier than his fighting weight of 54 kgs, in the Smart National Open in Cagayan de Oro City last October.

The result was a disastrous beating from rising sensation Orlando Tacuyan Jr. in front of dumbstruck fans.

"My form was terrible," said Tipon. But what jolted the 5-foot-7 Tipon to reality was the nationals' side trip to San Francisco, California, a day after the Worlds.

Tipon lost on points against a young member of the Northern California All Stars.

Shocked

Shocked and teary-eyed, Tipon said he suddenly considered hanging his gloves.

"The losses drained me and boxing didn't appeal to me any more," Tipon said.

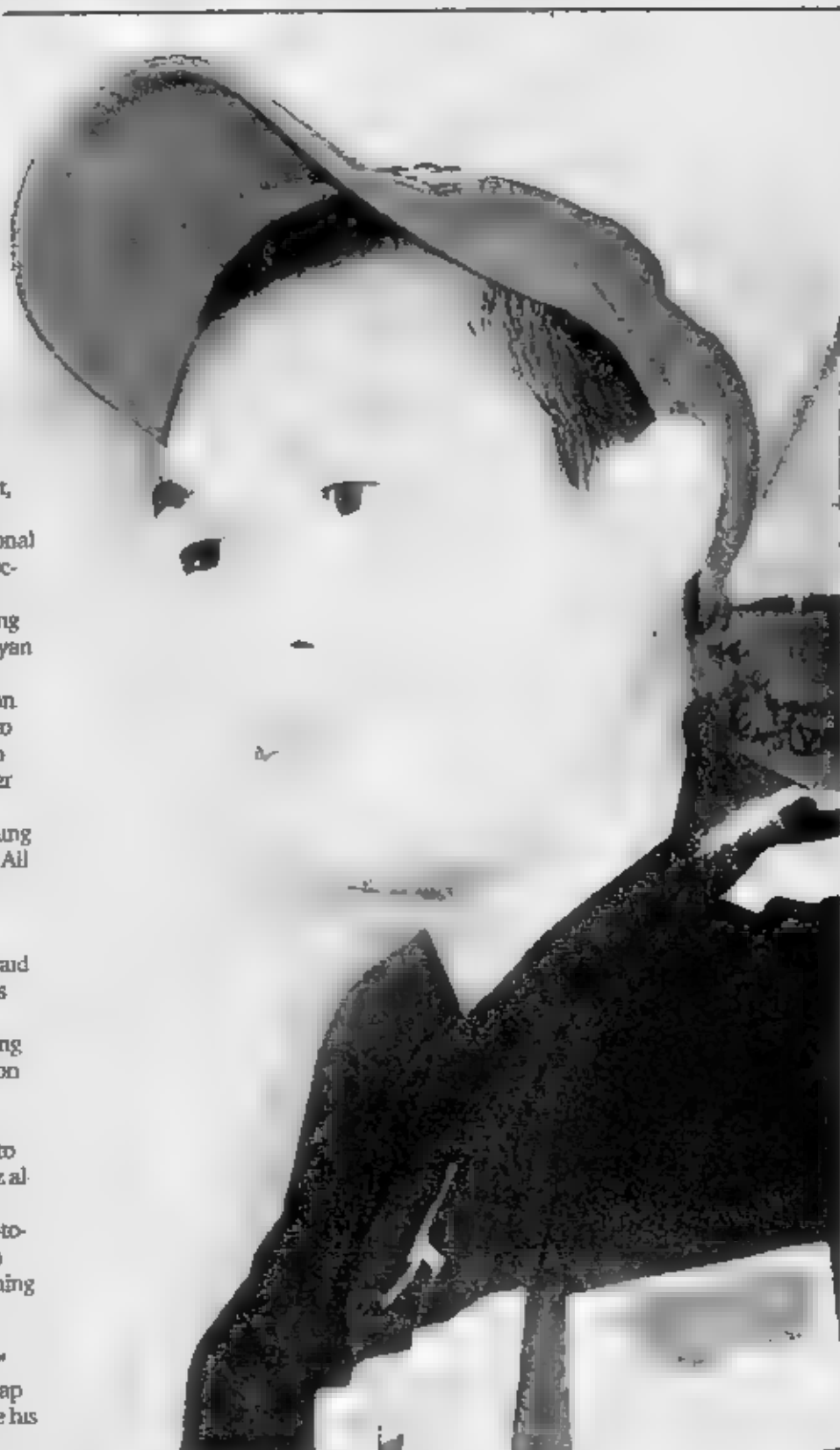
After Tipon's loss of form, Aabap president Manny T. Lopez decided to place Tipon on an active rest. Lopez also berated Tipon for his slide.

After a soul-searching and heart-to-heart talk with family, Tipon lost no time and rejoined the national training pool in Baguio City during the SEA Games.

"I put on extra hours in training," said Tipon. He went back to the Aabap Gym for the holidays but didn't lose his focus. "I didn't indulge in foods."

Tipon knows that flopping in Bangkok is going to put a question mark on his career. So he is going all out to make sure losing is out of the question.

But the qualifier is loaded with tough tests, foremost of which is the fact that the Nationals will face a hostile crowd that still has fresh in its minds the protest-near walkout launched by the RP squad during the SEA Games.



JOAN Tipon: Taking another crack at Olympic slot.

And then, to make it to the Beijing Olympics, Tipon needs to win at least the silver medal in Bangkok. In the Chicago Worlds, bronze medalists qualified for the 2008 Olympiad.

And finally, there are the tough foes. Standing in his way is Petchkoom, who also failed to gain an Olympic slot in Chicago. Losing Doha Asiad silver medalist Han Soon-chul will be pre-

sent and will be aching for revenge. That's not mentioning other Asian boxers who are as determined to box their way to Beijing.

Tipon knows that. But he isn't cowed. Not when redemption beckons for a struggling boxer once hailed as a gold-medal hope.

"You'll see a new Joan Tipon in Bangkok," Tipon vowed.

SPORTSWATCH

Pasig 4-cocker today

THE NOCHE BUENA SA PASIG 4-COCK derby gets going at 5 p.m. today with more than 70 entries at the Pasig Square Garden.

Tagged as favorites for the P750,000 guaranteed prize are the entries of Ronnie Lacina, Abel Zamudio, Elmer Nepomuceno, TJ Marquez, Joey Sy, Sam Mendoza, Edgar Coronel, Vinz Perea and Mayor Boyet Ynares.

Today's elimination will feature the 2-cock round. Participants may also field straight four cocks on Saturday, said hosts Inday and Edgar Coronel.

For details, call 6465858 and 6465828 (Aubray).

Roligon stages 100 fights

COCKFIGHT AFICIONADOS OF METRO Manila can expect 100 or more quality fights today in Roligon Mega Cockpit's Noche Buena 4-cock derby.

Participants include the entries of Allan Slaco, Terry Santos, Zaldy Aionsabe, Abraham Bernales, Super Ninja group, Mon Arcenas, Melling Dorado, Kabu Taniguchi, Col. Catlis, Benny Lado, Art de Castro, Boy Marcelino and Rap. Gerry Espina.

The winners will get a guaranteed prize of P500,000, said host Rolly Ligon.

Preparations are also underway for the RMC 18th Anniversary 5-cock derby on Jan. 22 and 24 with P1.2 million at stake.

Kings leave for China cage meet

THE PHILIPPINES BRACES FOR AN uphill drive in its tide-retention campaign in the seventh Zheng Cheng Gong Cup international basketball tournament starting tomorrow in Nanan City, Fujian, China.

Represented by Millennium Basketball League champion Polymaster Kings/5th Avenue, the Filipinos will be leaving today minus key players Jeffrey Sanders and Willie Moody, who have yet to secure their visas.

Handled by former national player Junnel Mendola, the Filipinos are eyeing their third straight crown in the quadrennial tournament being held in

honor of the revered Chinese general and hero.

The Philippines will be pitted against select teams from Indonesia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau and the Fujian All Stars of host China.

The Bobby Parks-reinforced Laguna Lakers of the defunct Metropolitan Basketball Association topped the 1999 edition, while a team led by John Perriols won the 2003 meet.

Both champion teams were handled by former Philippine Youth team coach Johny Tam, who was unable to join this year's campaign after being tapped to serve as interim mentor of

Air 21 Express in the PBA.

Aside from team owner James Café, the Polymaster Kings are being supported by Basketball Association of the Philippines president Prospero Pichay, MBL chair Alex Wang and National Basketball League president Christian Tan.

The players are former pro Braulio Lim, Luns Palaganas, Ronnie Zagala, Richard Latonjua, Michael Alexander Dizon, Romel David, Rey Mendoza Jr. and Fil-Am Michael Andre Burscher.

Delegation head is Tai Lian with Tai Xin Min as his assistant. James Café will act as team leader. *Ray Lucarica*

Rizal schools basketball tilt Jan. 7

THE SECOND RIZAL SCHOOLS AND COLLEGE Athletic Association (Riscas) basketball tournament will be held on Jan. 7, 2008 at the Angono Gym in Angono, Rizal.

This was announced by Riscas president Ricardo Andres Tuesday during an executive board meeting held at the Angono Sports Complex.

The six participating schools are Don Jose Ynares Memorial National School in Binangonan, Angono Private High School, Ginger Grace Academy, Child Jesus Prague

School, Binangonan Garden of Learners, and Kids World Christian Academy in San Mateo.

Andres was joined in the meeting by Antonio Antazo Sr., vice president and technical head, Romy Ubaldo, commissioner, and members of the participating schools. The tournament will last for two months.

Riscas is affiliated with the Federation of School Sports Association of the Philippines headed by Tisha Abundo.

Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

Missing tarpaulin case solved

IF YOU LIVE somewhere in the Alabang area, chances are you would've seen a huge tarpaulin along Madrigal Avenue right across Ayala Alabang.

It's so huge you won't miss it: Six meters long, three meters high with photos of the young swimmers (the Fighting Orcas) who competed in the Chinese Taipei last November showing off the medals they won. With them is coach Susan Papa.

The first version of that tarpaulin, which was displayed for eight days, mysteriously disappeared. Muntinlupa Mayor Aldrin San Pedro's operatives later found it on a shanty in the squatters' area.

It was used as the roof.

According to the residents, they bought it from streetchildren who sold the tarpaulin for P175, a big bargain since it had cost the original owners P10,000 to have it done.

IN HUDDLE



Beth Celis

The tarpaulin was returned to Susan. But being a generous, kindhearted soul, Susan, in the spirit of Christmas, told the family to keep it. The young thieves were also caught but Susan forgave them after they explained that they needed money for food.

Susan and the parents of the swimmers decided to chip in for a new tarpaulin which you now see.

The tarpaulin has been there for more than a week now and even if Susan is currently in Singapore, she has no fear that it will be stolen again.

Not because the thieves have learned their lesson, or there are no more criminal elements left in the area, but because the swim club and Mayor Aldrin have pooled resources to hire guards whose only job is to guard the tarpaulin—round the clock.

Several sports celebrities and VIPs were present during a recent party I attended in Quezon City, but the center of attention was not a person. It was a car.

Everybody wanted to know who owned the Jaguar parked outside the party place.

It took me awhile to discover that the Jaguar belonged to Orville Roque, president of Asra Inc., distributor of Extreme Magic Sing, since he didn't look like the type to be driving flashy sports cars.

Orville hesitantly admitted that the center of attraction was his, explaining that it was an "old" three-year old model.

I concluded that the new one must be the BMW he left at home.

Orville admitted that he is a frustrated basketball player, just like so many men are, which is why he supports the PBA and the PBL in a big way.

Apart from basketball, Extreme is also into other sports like billiards and boxing and big sporting events like the recently concluded Southeast Asian Games.

"I'd like to think that in our own small way, we are contributing to the development of sports in our country," Orville said.

Like SBP president Manny V Pangilinan, Orville's yuletide wish is for the country to win its first ever Olympic gold medal in Beijing next year.

About two weeks ago when I bumped into Welcoat owner Raymond Yu at The Podium, he was lamenting the fact that his team has won only three games so far in the ongoing PBA conference which started last October.

"Three wins and how many losses?" I asked.

Raymond said he does not know because he only wants to remember the wins. Yesterday I texted Raymond to ask for the team's latest win figure.

His reply: "3."

Just Welcoat's luck I guess, that some of its key players had to be injured after a major rebuilding early this season.



CYCLING CHAMP: Quezon City Majority Floor Leader Ariel Inton (left) awards trophy to Joy Calderon, champion in the recent 2007 Tatalon Cycling Club Open Pro Invitational Competition.

Espiritu still seeking '97 SEAG gold medal

YEARS AGO, VICTOR ESPIRITU WAS DECLARED the rightful winner of a cycling event. So he hung the silver medal that he initially won on his wall while waiting for the replacement gold medal to arrive.

That was during the 1997 Southeast Asian Games. And up to now, Espiritu continues to wait.

Bert Lina, president of the national federation for cycling, said he would ask Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose Cojuangco Jr. to make representations to the SEA Games Federation so Espiritu can claim the gold medal.

Espiritu finished second to Indonesian Tonton Susanto in the 1997 Jakarta SEA Games men's ITT, but Susanto was later stripped of the gold medal days after the end of the Games when his urine sample tested positive for banned substances.

"I hope they'd give me my gold medal; it's my first in the SEA Games," said Espiritu, now 32, in Filipino.

Espiritu won his second SEA Games gold medal 10 years after Jakarta in the Nakhon Ratchasima Games recently.

"Victor should get what is due him, what he deserves for his effort," said Lina.

Medalists in international competitions who test positive for drugs are supposed to return their medals, regardless of color, to organizers.

Kobe, Lakers eclipse Suns



TREVOR Ariza (top) of the LA Lakers soars against Grant Hill of the Phoenix Suns and finishes with a dunk, one that caught the attention of Kobe Bryant and the rest of the Lakers (below).



LOS ANGELES—THE SURGING LOS ANGELES LAKERS scored a 122-115 win over the Phoenix Suns on Tuesday, with Kobe Bryant knocking down 38 points and Andrew Bynum adding a career-high 28.

The victory was the third in a row for the Lakers and their ninth in their last 11 games. They moved to within one game of first-place Phoenix in the Pacific division.

"We are aware of the standings, but we also know that last year we were 10 games over .500 and moving along—then injuries [slew] the dragon, so to speak," Lakers coach Phil Jackson told reporters. "We just have to play every game and not think about anything else, just what's ahead of us."

Bryant, who on Sunday became the youngest player to reach 20,000 points, scored 26 of his 38 in the second half to help the Lakers improve to 18-10.

"I think we are a solid team," said Bryant, who also had seven assists and five rebounds.

"When you play against Phoenix, you have to be solid. You can afford a couple of mistakes here and there but ultimately your defensive execution has to be there, and your offensive execution has to be there. We're able to get it done consistently."

Improving young center Bynum was 11-for-13 from the floor as LA beat Phoenix for the second time in a row.

"This definitely was one of my better games," said the 20-year-old. "[I] made a big impact; [my] teammates [were] looking for me, [I was] wide open a lot of times and they found me today."

Steve Nash led the Suns with 24 points and 14 assists but Phoenix has lost five of its last eight.

The Cleveland Cavaliers rallied from a 10-point deficit to beat the Miami Heat, 98-82.

LeBron James scored 25 points and dished out 12 assists. He also took a shot to the jaw from Shaquille O'Neal.

"I got elbowed by Shaq in the face, which is never a good thing," said James, whose jaw was swollen after the game.

Miami dropped to 8-20, the worst record in the Eastern Conference.

The Portland Trail Blazers won their 11th in a row, scoring an 89-79 home victory over the Seattle SuperSonics.

Korean boxer falls into coma

SEOUL—SOUTH KOREAN BOXER CHOI Yo-sam lapsed into a coma defending his World Boxing Organization intercontinental flyweight title after taking a beating in the final round, officials said on Wednesday.

Choi, who won Tuesday's fight on points, was sent to the canvass just seconds before the end of the 12th and final round by a hard right landed by Indonesian challenger Heri Amol.

Choi, 33, staggered to his feet but collapsed later. Choi underwent brain surgery for a cere-

bral hemorrhage, but the outlook looks bad.

"Even if he does recover, there seems to be a high chance he will be in a vegetative state," said Han Bo-young, vice president and secretary general of Korea Boxing Commission.

The fight brought back memories of a 1982 title bout in Las Vegas between lightweight champion Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini of the United States and Kim Duk-koo, where the South Korean challenger died from injuries sustained in the fight.

Reuters





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that

number

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feeling

Informing and inspiring Filipino readers for more than two decades through balanced news and fearless views, the Philippine Daily Inquirer has undoubtedly become the country's number 1 newspaper. Our heartfelt thanks for making the Inquirer a part of your daily reading habit.

As we celebrate our 22nd anniversary, Inquirer grants 22 loyal readers their wishes - from an exciting wish like meeting your local idol to a romantic one like celebrating your 25th wedding anniversary in a beach resort. Let us know what you really want. In 300 words or less, tell us:

- 1) How long have you been reading the Philippine Daily Inquirer?
- 2) What do you like most about the Inquirer, and we dare ask, what do you like least?
- 3) What is your number 1 wish that Inquirer can grant you, and why?

Handwritten responses to the survey questions are visible in the background of the form area.

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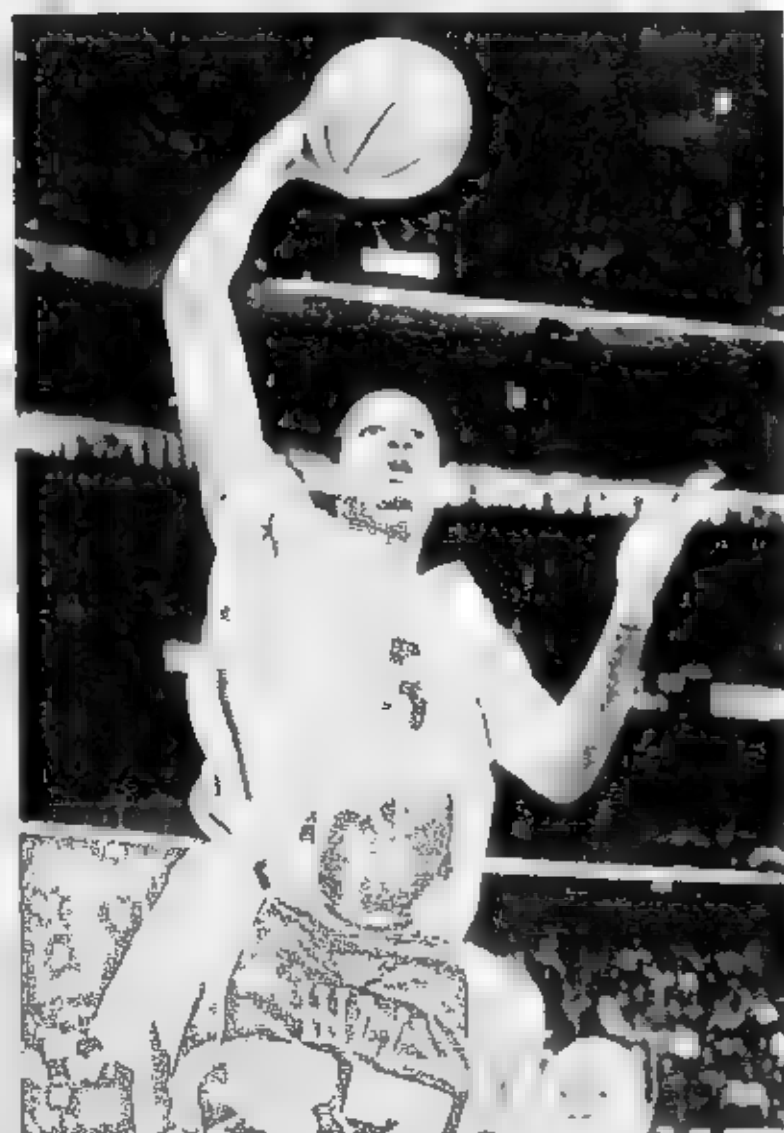
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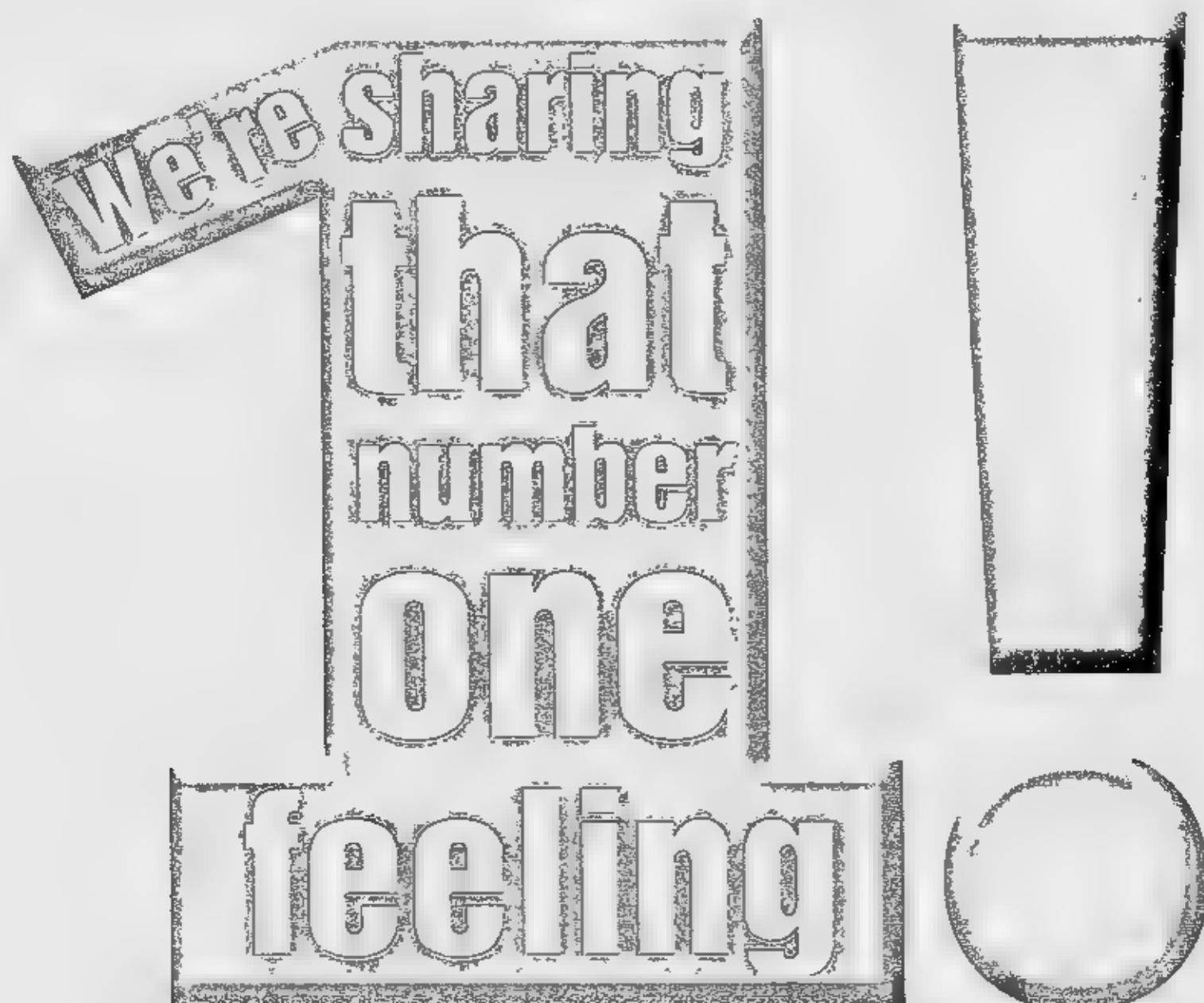
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Reuters



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THE SHAKEY'S V-League enjoys another banner year as crowds continue to flock playing venues. The UST Tigresses likewise had a lot of success this season.

AUGUST DELA CRUZ

SHAKEY'S VOLLEYBALL

UST Tigresses, Thais make V-League soar

By Romina S. Austria

IMPORTS FROM THAILAND HELPED the Shakey's V-League soar to greater heights. Even if the University of Santo Tomas Tigresses found a way to roar mightily without their help.

An All-Filipino UST squad twice claimed the crown in the country's premier volleyball league for women, capping their romp by silencing a San Sebastian College crew powered by Thai spiker Jaroensri Bualee.

The Tigresses thus hiked their V-League collection to three crowns and watched their popularity soar among members of a growing fan base of the league. They now have same number of titles with the De La Salle Lady Archers.

Reigning UAAP Valuable Player Venus Bernal, Mary Jean Balse, Angeli Tabaque-ro and Denise Tan—all of them Filipinos—are now household names, thanks to UST's dominant performance.

UST coach Augusto Santamaria said the Tigresses' winning season was a result of a one-

year buildup after a leave of absence in 2006. The veteran mentor felt UST's lineup last year was not as competitive after the graduation of some key players.

"We didn't like to play with an incomplete team," said Santamaria. "We want to give our supporters their money's worth."

Thus, after winning the inaugural season in 2004 and finishing runner-up to La Salle in the next two, UST smothered the opposition this season.

In the first conference, the Tigresses had a 4-3 record behind the Lady Stags and the Lyceum Lady Pirates' 6-1 cards but swept all their four semifinal assignments to advance to the finals outright.

The Lady Pirates, who wound up third, won just one of four semifinal games while the Lady Stags had to beat the Lady Archers in a playoff to advance against the Tigresses.

Flu-stricken

Santamaria's crew, a few of them stricken by flu before Game 2, eventually swept the best-of-three finals.

Against the former Thai national junior player Bualee and Theresa Iratay, Suzanne Rocas (who replaced Nerissa

Bautista after the elimination round) and Rubie de Leon more than held their own in the battle of guest players.

In the second conference, it was San Sebastian that clinched a finals slot first while the Tigresses needed to hurdle the Ateneo Lady Eagles, who also paraded for the second straight conference another Thai guest player in Luthawat Kesinee, in a playoff for the second finals seat.

But the road to glory was tougher this time around for the UST squad.

The Lady Stags won the opener in five sets, breathing life to their hope of a breakthrough crown.

But the Tigresses refused to simply roll over and equalized the series with a virtuoso 3-0 rout of the Lady Stags in Game Two, setting the stage for the you-or-me showdown.

And in a gripping finale that reached the fifth set, Bernal and Co. were not to be denied, powering the España-based squad to yet another championship.

Despite the fact that the Thai imports of the league helped improve the quality of the game, Sta. Maria said playing all-Filipino gave them a certain edge.

"When you have a foreign guest player, the tendency is to rely too much on the



BUALEE

AUGUST DELA CRUZ



KESINEE

AUGUST DELA CRUZ

import," Santamaria noted. "The idea to have imports did the league a lot of good in terms of generating excitement but on our part, we saw no need to hire one."

San Sebastian coach Roger Gorayeb noted that, unlike in the first conference where they were outplayed, the breaks of the game decided the second conference finals.

"We won Game 1 and were ahead two sets to one in Game 2, but come Game 3, we let our guard down," said Gorayeb of his three-peat NCAA champion team. "Calis that shouldn't have been called at all also broke my players' momentum."

No excuses

"But I offer no excuses. I'm still happy with our performance because we gave UST a good fight. We made them bleed for every point," Gorayeb added.

For the San Sebastian coach, hiring Bualee was worth her price tag, which was relatively cheap considering the figures bar-coded into imports of the basketball variety.

Bualee's services, the Lady Stags' import for three conferences now, cost \$2,000, excluding airfare, board and lodging and allowance. She was actually not their first choice but Thailand's best players are also playing as imports in other leagues or training in Germany and Turkey.

And besides, with the sport still having to contend with the dearth of available talent here, hiring Bualee was a perfect way to temporarily fill the void.

"We would get Jeng (Bualee) again if

we must because there's no available local player," said Gorayeb.

The Shakey's V-League itself was a big winner this year. All three finals matches in the second conference were played before a capacity crowd at the 5,000-seater The Arena in San Juan.

Paying fans in the ringside and upper levels (the bleachers section was offered for free) came in all shapes and sizes, from the students of the participating schools to plain volleyball aficionados. Even when the league was still using the Rizal Memorial Coliseum, which could seat up to 9,000, fans almost always filled the venue to the rafters.

Maunicio Martelino, chairman of organizing Sports Vision, said it has always been their vision to make the league as big as it is now and at the same time, help volleyball regain its once lofty status.

"The public response and the support in the last two years indicate that we're on the right track," said Martelino. "Although UST dominated the 2007 season, games have been tight and exciting. We believe we will surpass our feats next year in terms of excitement and number of fans."

Santamaria said he knows volleyball officials are aware of the V-League's achievements.

"I hope they realize that volleyball has a big following," said Santamaria. "UST is more proud of the fact that it helped the league bring in the fans. Our titles are just secondary rewards for the team."

"Sponsors should take notice," said Gorayeb. "They should also support other sports."

THE UST Tigresses celebrate the second of two Shakey's V-League titles they won this season.

AUGUST DELA CRUZ



Patriots stand on edge of NFL glory

DENVER—IT IS QUITE THE CONUNDRUM the New England Patriots have fallen into. For more than five months, the team has firmly adhered to the gospel of sport clichés—togetherness, focus and, hoardest of all, playing them one game at a time.

Through 15 contests, most of them blowouts, a couple of nail-biters—many featuring one persona, franchise or NFL record or another—New England stuck to the script, winning them all.

"When you have things going good like that, it's hard to keep everybody on the same page," wide receiver Randy Moss said. "It's hard to keep everybody focused."

Indeed, only one NFL team has managed to do go through an entire year without any slip-page whatsoever—the 1972 Miami Dolphins, who won all 14 of their regular season games and another three playoff contests to finish 17-0. With a victory Saturday night over the New York Giants, the Patriots would complete the first 16-0 regular-season mark in league history.

However, not long after win No. 15, last Sunday's 28-7 triumph over the NY Dolphins, New England found itself on unfamiliar ground—the team that has strove so mightily to sustain the here and now, had to admit that, from this point on, they really need to win the remainder of their games.

Apart from history, nothing is at stake for the Pats in the Meadowlands; the team has already clinched the top playoff seed in the AFC and with it a first round bye. But obviously, a loss in the postseason would completely lay to waste a heretofore spectacular campaign, and the players say the first step in avoiding that is to beat the Giants.

"We want to go into the playoffs with some momentum and nothing good can come out of losing in the last game of the season," veteran Troy Brown said.

Which, they acknowledge, would cause the single-game mantra and history to intersect.

"We are here now," linebacker Tedy Bruschi said. "We've won 15 and we always talk about the next game. Well, the next game is the New

York Giants and if we win that we go to 16-0.

"People could make a big deal out of 16-0, but then we'd be right back to trying to win the next game," he said. "We haven't done anything special yet—we've won 15 games and that doesn't do you any good if you go in to the playoffs and lose in the first round. You can talk about setting records and all that, but if you lose in the playoffs, everyone's still going to feel like crap."

In that sense, at this point, the Patriots really aren't any different than the 1984 49ers, the '85 Bears, the '98 Vikings or the 2004 Steelers—each of those teams won 15 games in the regular season. While the first two squads on that short list finished their seasons with just one loss, they aren't placed in the same category as the '72 Dolphins.

"If you go to the Super Bowl and lose, nobody remembers that you were there," Manny Fernandez, a defensive tackle on that perfect Miami team, said. "It's not winning out through the regular season, it's winning all the way through."

NYTimes News Service



MTBC'S PERFECT GAMER

The Makati Thursday Bowler's Club celebrates after one of its members, club auditor Kap Aguila bagged the Perfect Gamer award. Aguila (third from right), who is also a journalist, received a whopping P50,000 prize for his feat. Joining the revelry are the rest of its officers (from left), MTBC legal counsel, lawyer Pol Mayuga, medical director Dr. Alex Salud, tournament director, William Monedero, club adviser Noli Dima, club president Col. Didoy Ruiz, club vice president Mel Austria and deputy treasurer and membership committee chair Helen Austria.

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Sandigan stops Philcomsat takeover

PCGG ordered not to recognize Nov. 19 elections

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION on Good Government-backed directors of the Philcomsat group of companies won a reprieve from the Sandiganbayan after it ordered a temporary halt to a takeover by private shareholders of the sequestered firms.

Almost immediately, the head of the rival Ilusorio-Africa group yesterday reacted to the decision, saying the court's action was based on the manifestation of an "unhinged" complainant "who calls herself Philcomsat Holdings Corp. (PHC) chair."

In a text message to the INQUIRER, Philcomsat president and CEO Erlinda I. Buidner disputed the grounds on which the anti-graft court issued the injunction against the new directors of the group.

Yesterday, however, the Locsin-Poblador group said that the Sandiganbayan ordered the PCGG "not to

recognize the election of the Ilusorio-Africa group last Nov. 19 to two sequestered Philcomsat boards."

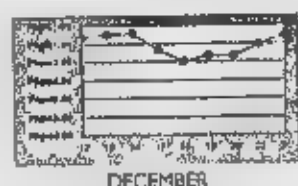
In issuing the temporary restraining order, the court gave way to a complaint filed by PHC chair Concepcion Poblador, who said the rival Ilusorio-Africa group did not have the authority to hold the elections.

She claimed that the rival camp also did not have any document signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo to show that the new board nominees in fact represented the government.

She added in her complaint that

IN THIS ISSUE

Atlas Mining gets board nod to join Zambo project/B2



INDICATORS CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 41.28 = \$1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 26, 2007

STOCK MARKET

Shares surge 2.3%

SHARES SURGED YESTERDAY, closing at a two-week high as fund managers began enhancing portfolios before the year ends, traders said.

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

10,000

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DECEMBER

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Atlas Mining gets board nod to join Zambo project

By Amy R. Ramo

LISTED FIRM ATLAS CONSOLIDATED Mining and Development Corp. yesterday secured the approval of its board to participate in the Canatuan copper/zinc sulphide project in Canatuan, Zamboanga Peninsula.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Atlas Mining said the Canatuan project was being undertaken and operated by TVI Resource Development, a local mining and exploration firm.

Atlas said the board approval covered its advances of P42 million to TVI Resource.

The advances are intended as a convertible loan subject to the conclusion of the negotiations between Atlas and TVI Resource on the formation of a joint venture to undertake the Canatuan project.

It added that the advances would be secured by a pledge of shares.

Conversion of advances to equity

Atlas Mining said in the disclosure that the Canatuan project was at an advanced stage of development with much of the required plant, equipment and infrastructure already in place.

The firm added that potential resources existed to the north of the property covered by the Canatuan Mineral Production Sharing Agreement, which may extend the estimated mine life beyond six years.

Detailed mine feasibility studies have been completed and, subject to financial availability and due diligence, Atlas Mining estimated

that first production of copper concentrates could start as early as the second half of 2008.

Meanwhile, the mining firm's Toledo copper project in Cebu is on schedule to start production by mid-2008, with its \$200-million rehabilitation of the mine on track.

It expects to begin ore processing at an initial capacity of 20,000 tons a day, which will increase to its maximum capacity of 42,000 tons a day by the third quarter of 2009.

For the next decade, Atlas Mining said production at the Toledo copper mine would average 47,000 tons of contained copper a year.

With the progress of the mine's rehabilitation activities, the board of directors of Atlas Mining has also approved the further infusion of some \$6.55 million into the Toledo mining project through Atlas Mining's subscription to additional Carmen Copper shares.

Lopez firm eyes partners for Meralco bid

FIRST PHILIPPINE HOLDINGS CORP. OF the Lopez Group is studying the possibility of teaming up with foreign partners in its potential bid for the government's 29-percent stake in dominant power distributor and sister firm Manila Electric Co. (Meralco).

First Holdings president Elpidio Ibañez said in a recent meeting with reporters that the company was interested in the Meralco stake if the government would sell it as one block.

He declined to identify which foreign partners have stated interest in the Meralco block when asked if there were talks with Japanese partners Marubeni Corp. and Sumitomo Corp. for the plan.

"If it's (government offer) 10 percent, it's not interesting because you can buy that in the stock market," Ibañez said.

"If we look at the government's 29 percent that it might auction, we may look at trying it with partners because we don't need to get the whole thing," he earlier said in a separate interview.

First Holdings is raising its stake in Meralco to 33.4 percent from 17.7 percent.

This it would do by completing the acquisitions of additional stakes in Meralco consisting of the 9.1-percent interest indirectly held by Spanish utility firm Union Fenosa Internacional S.A. through First Philippine Union Fenosa, and the 6.6-percent direct stake of the Meralco Pension Fund.

First Holdings recently secured \$300 million in fresh funds through a loan which will largely be used to fund the increase in its Meralco stake.

EDO Capital and Investment Corp. president Eduardo Francisco had said the investment bank and First Holdings signed last October a floating rate note facility agreement that raised \$300 million for the Lopez company.

Elisabeth Sanchez-Lacson

Shang Properties unit acquires prime lot in Fort Bonifacio

By Elisabeth Sanchez-Lacson

SHANG GLOBAL CITY PROPERTIES Inc., a subsidiary of listed firm Shang Properties Inc., has acquired a 15,000-square meter prime lot at the Fort Bonifacio Global City central business district in Taguig City.

In a disclosure to the stock exchange yesterday, Shang Properties Inc., formerly Edsa Properties Holdings Inc., said its subsidiary bought the 15,120-sq. m. property located at the "West Super Block" of Global City from Fort Bonifacio Development Corp. (FBDC).

FBDC is the partnership between the Ayala-Campos property groups and the Bases Conversion Development Authority that spearheads the master-planning of the Bonifacio Global City.

The West Super Block is at the western end of Ayala Land's restaurant and shopping strip dubbed Bonifacio High Street, that faces 5th Avenue.

Shang Properties told the PSE that an amount representing 10 percent of the estimated purchase price was paid to FBDC upon the signing of a contract to sell last Dec. 18.

The balance of 90 percent is payable upon the fulfillment of certain terms and conditions expected to take place in the

second quarter of 2008

Shang Properties also said the funds to be used for the acquisition would come from existing cash and possible bank debt.

Officials of Shang Properties could not be reached for details of its plan for the Fort Bonifacio property.

Shang Properties has four major subsidiaries—Shangri-La Plaza Corp. (78.72-percent owned); Edsa Parking Services Inc. (wholly owned), The Shang Grand Tower Corp. (wholly owned); and EPHI Logistics Holdings Inc. (60 percent-owned).

Shangri-La Plaza owns, leases and operates the Shangri-La Plaza Shopping Complex in Mandaluyong City that houses two department stores (Rustan's and Crossings), theater, cinemas, restaurants, fast-food outlets, boutiques and specialty stores.

Edsa Parking Services owns and operates car park facilities surrounding the Shangri-La Plaza Shopping Complex.

Shang Grand Tower is a realty development company that constructed The Shang Grand Tower, a high-rise luxury condominium in the Makati Commercial Business District. It is also the owner and developer of The St. Francis—A Shangri-La Place, a two-tower, high-rise residential condominium located in Ortigas.

Sandigan stops Philcomsat takeover

the companies' stockholders were also not informed of the elections that were held last Nov. 19.

The [Sandigan-bayan's] order is another major legal victory for the Poblador group, which includes board members representing the government led by Enrique Locsin who was appointed by the President himself," it added.

According to the Locsin-Poblador group, the Court of Appeals issued earlier this year an order that "in effect threw out all legal challenges to the legitimacy of the Locsin-Poblador board filed by the Ilusorio-Africa group, which is composed largely of Marcos cronies or their children and associates."

The PCGG-backed

side pointed out that the Ilusorio-Africa group elected its members into Philippine Overseas Telecommunications Corp. (POTC) and Philippine Communications Satellite Corp. (Philcomsat) last November, "claiming its members represented the government."

"They also used Presidential Management Staff Undersecretary Enrrique Perez to vote the sequestered shares held by the government," the group added. "Perez had been sued for usurping PCGG authority to vote these shares as a result."

Poblador, in her complaint to the Sandiganbayan, said the Ilusorio-Africa government members did not have the President's so-called "desire let-

ter" instructing PCGG to vote them to the boards of the sequestered firms.

"Despite the Locsin-Poblador group's legal victories, the Ilusorio-Africa board, using force, had taken physical control of POTC and Philcomsat, and just recently, the main office of the cash-rich PHC that is

being run by the Locsin-Poblador board," it added.

Bildner, however, disputed the version of events outlined by her rival camp, saying that only five guards—not 30—were on hand during the recent takeover of PHC's offices in Makati City.

From page B1

"[Poblador's] difficulty with counting partly explains why [the company] has lost P400 million in cash," she said. "Given the ravaged condition of PHC, the company would have been better off run by the guards than by the plundering PCGG nominees."

CURRENCIES

Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.694107	1.000000	41.6836
Japan	Yen	0.006084	0.008765	0.3654
United Kingdom	Pound	1.375026	1.981060	82.6740
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.088928	0.128115	5.3402
Switzerland	Franc	0.600075	0.864528	36.0361
Canada	Dollar	0.704749	1.015332	42.3221
Singapore	Dollar	0.477673	0.688184	28.6856
Australia	Dollar	0.694517	0.970928	36.3027
Bahrain	Dinar	1.848369	2.682974	111.8009
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.184937	0.266439	11.1060
Brunei	Dollar	0.476035	0.685824	28.5872
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000074	0.000106	0.0044
Thailand	Baht	0.020609	0.029691	1.2376
UAE	Dirham	0.189016	0.272316	11.3509
EU	Euro	1.000000	1.440700	60.0527
Korea	Won	0.000739	0.001065	0.0444
China	Yuan	0.094696	0.136431	5.6869
Denmark	Kroner	0.134031	0.193098	8.0489
India	Ruppee	0.017630	0.025400	1.0587
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.207916	0.299536	12.4858
New Zealand	Dollar	0.531476	0.765697	31.9165
Sweden	Kroner	0.105356	0.151787	6.3269
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.021360	0.030773	1.2627

* Source: Reuters' foreign closing prices as of NY time—Dec. 27, 2007
* Values based on Reuters as quoted by Reuters' Europe
* Values based on Reuters as of Dec. 26, 2007

Philippine Stock Exchange

(As of December 26, 2007)

52 WEEK	52 WEEK	STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	CHANGE
17.5	6.8	Asiatrust Development Bank Inc.	8.3	8.5	8.3	8.5	7 JJO
73	44	Banco de Oro-EPIC Inc.	81	82	80.5	81	800
73.5	53	Bank of the Philippine Islands	80	82	80	82	1731.000
748	544	China Banking Corp.	550	550	550	550	7780
24	14	Citibank Savings Bank	23.75	24	23.75	24	1300
0.83	0.36	Export and Industry Bank Inc.	0.36	0.38	0.36	0.38	310.000
75.5	47.5	Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co.	56	57	55.5	56	1136.000
65.5	36	Philippine National Bank	49	49.5	48.5	49	553.000
68	46	Philippine Savings Bank	58	59	58	58.5	4300
39.57	20.48	Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.	24	24.5	23.75	24.25	809.400
80	65	Security Bank Corp.	78	78	77	77.5	101.400
66	42	Union Bank of the Philippines	43.5	43.5	43	43.5	79.100
BANKING SERVICES							
2.22	0.6	Bank of the Philippine Islands	1.82	1.88	1.82	1.88	125.000
16.25	4.6	Bank of the Philippine Islands	11	11.25	10.75	11.25	83.000
5.9	4.6	Bank of the Philippine Islands	4.55	4.55	4.55	4.55	1.000
1570.00	1,580.00	Manila Financial Corp.	1,650.00	1,675.00	1,650.00	1,675.00	1,380
8	2.7	National Resources Corp. of the Phil.	3.35	3.35	3.2	3.25	2,825.000
1,390.00	272.5	The Philippine Stock Exchange Inc.	1,050.00	1,070.00	1,050.00	1,070.00	100
2,500.00	1,870.00	Sun Life Financial Inc.	2,270.00	2,270.00	2,270.00	2,270.00	580
1	1	Sun Life Financial Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.64	1.66	2,700.000
POWER							
5.2	3.8	Abotit Power Corp.	5.3	5.3	5.1	5.1	6.000
70.5	40	First Gen Corp.	71	71.5	70	71.5	220.000
82	50	First Phil. Holdings Corp.	73	73.5	73	73.5	411.800
19	8.8	Manila Water Co. Inc.	18.75	19	18.5	18.75	885.200
105.48	48.84	Manila Electric Co.	81	84	81	83	1,010.800
7.4	4.3	PNOC Energy Development Corp.	6.7	6.8	6.7	6.8	5,995.000
7.8	3.95	PNOC Energy Development Corp.	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8	7,110.000
14.75	6.4	Phoenix Petroleum Philippines Inc.	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.4	13.000
2.5	1.7	SPC Power Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	2,743.000
2.04	0.94	Trans-Asia Oil & Energy Dev't Corp.	1.22	1.22	1.22	1.22	2,743.000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO							
6.3	3.4	Alaska Milk Corp.	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.3	725.000
2.32	1.46	Alliance Tuna International Inc.	1.54	1.54	1.5	1.5	24.000
2.2	1.08	CAUP Group Corp.	1.82	1.82	1.82	1.82	4.000
28.5	20	Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	25	25	25	25	15.000
61	41	Jollibee Foods Corp.	51.5	51.5	51	51.5	920.700
0.98	0.51	Pancake House Inc.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	100.000
3.1	2.06	RPM Corp.	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88	200.000
80	42.5	Roxas Holdings	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	503.000
68	43	San Miguel Corp. "A"	80	80	80	80	27.600
20.76	13.5	San Miguel Corp. "B"	61	61	60	60	414.900
0.4	0.24	Universal Robina Corp.	13.75	13.75	13.5	13.5	703.300
		Vitacorch Corp.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	60.000
RETAIL							
6	2.65	EE Corp.	4	4.05	3.95	4	1,098.000
21.3	4	Federal Resources Invest. Group Inc.	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	4.100
7	3.65	Republic Cement Corp.	4	4.05	4	4	1,840.000
2	0.81	Republic Cement Corp.	1	1.02	1	1.02	360.000
21	2.12	Southwest Asia Cement Holdings Inc.	9	9	8.6	8.6	582.000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS							
0.75	0.10	Spish Resources Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.79	0.8	830.000
0.75	0.10	Spish Resources Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.79	0.8	830.000
MULTI-PURPOSE							
3.9	2.7	A. Soriano Corp.	3.35	3.35	3.35	3.35	500.000
0.185	0.0575	AJUNet Holdings Inc.	0.115	0.12	0.115	0.115	14,030.000
1.28	0.3	APG Group Inc.	0.8	0.82	0.59	0.8	8.000
3.65	1.05	ATN Holdings Inc.	2.45	2.45	2.45	2.45	4.000
0.0182	0.0075	Atacora Corp. Inc. & Holdings Inc. "A"	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	8,000.000
9.7	5.8	Atacora Corp. Inc. & Holdings Inc. "A"	8.8	8.8	8.7	8.8	3,924.000
0.021	0.01	Atacora Corp. Inc. & Holdings Inc. "A"	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.014	22,401.000
7.3	3.5	Alliance Global Group Inc.	5.2	5.4	5.2	5.3	5,924.000
1.36	0.81	Alliance Global Group Inc.	0.75	0.78	0.75	0.78	15.000
2.9	1.04	Alliance Global Group Inc.	2.32	2.34	2.3	2.32	1,200.000
8.45	4.00	Alliance Global Group Inc.	530	530	520	525	7.000
15.25	8.09	Alliance Global Group Inc.	13.75	13.75	13.5	13.5	2.000
5.8	2.14	Alliance Global Group Inc.	4.85	4.85	4.85	4.85	1,831.000
12	5.8	Alliance Global Group Inc.	9.7	9.7	9.7	9.7	1,065.000
2.5	0.86	Alliance Global Group Inc.	1.46	1.46	1.46	1.46	50.000
3.56	1.75	Alliance Global Group Inc.	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	814.000
14.5	6.7	Alliance Global Group Inc.	2	2	2	2	500.000
2.58	1.42	Alliance Global Group Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	53.000
28	14.2	Alliance Global Group Inc.	18.75	18.75	18.75	18.75	13.000
11.5	1.5	Alliance Global Group Inc.	8.3	8.5	8.3	8.3	867.000
8.5	3.1	Alliance Global Group Inc.	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	1.000
2.3	0.018	Alliance Global Group Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.2	0.2	37.000
45.8	254.81	Alliance Global Group Inc.	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.8	33.000
2.5	1.08	Alliance Global Group Inc.	345	345	345	345	48.500
0.73	0.135	Alliance Global Group Inc.	1.16	1.2	1.16	1.2	319.000
2	0.82	Alliance Global Group Inc.	0.86	0.86	0.84	0.84	180.000
4.05	0.93	Alliance Global Group Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	350.000
0.75	0.12	Alliance Global Group Inc.	4.05	4.05	4.05	4.05	1,300.000
ENERGY							
2.34	1	A Brown Co Inc	2.04	2.08	2.02	2.02	380.000
8.8	8	Anchor Land Holdings Inc.	6.8	7.2	6.8	7.2	98.000
1.06	0.4	Anchor Properties Inc.	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	16.000
19.25	12.00	Ayala Land Inc.	14.25	14.75	14.25	14.75	1,069.200
1.88	1	Bella Corp.	1.28	1.28	1.22	1.22	359.000
0.67	0.35	Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	62.000
0.86	0.41	Crown Equities Inc.	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	13.000
0.83	0.34	Cyber Bay Corp.	0.37	0.37	0.36	0.36	1,834.000
1.05	0.56	Empire East Land Holdings Inc.	0.81	0.81	0.8	0.8	5.000
0.9	0.12	Eton Properties Philippines Inc.	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.9	25.000
0.47	0.0575	Bay Group Resources & Holdings Inc.	0.22	0.225	0.22	0.225	1,391.000
1.48	0.81	Ri-Estate Land Inc.	0.85	0.95	0.94	0.94	1,016.000
2.44	1.22	Philinvest Land Inc.	1.4	1.44	1.38	1.38	40.000
1.12	0.31	MRC Allied Industries Inc.	0.53	0.53	0.52	0.52	1,040.000
4.6	2.24	Megaworld Corp.	4	4.1	4	4.05	13,427.000
5.8	3.2	Metro Pacific Investments Corp.	4.3	4.35	4.3	4.3	330.000
0.86	0.32	Philippine Realty & Holdings Corp.	0.48	0.47	0.46	0.46	2,270.000
23	14.5	Robinson Land Corp.	16	16.25	16	16	363.500
5.9	2.08	SM Development Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.75	3.75	183.000
13.5	8	SM Prime Holdings Inc.	10.75	11	10.5	10.75	9,888.500
3.25	1.6	Shang Properties Inc.	2.2	2.24	2.2	2.2	1,762.000
4.5	0.30	Sta. Lucia Land Inc.	1.8	1.84	1.8	1.84	204.000
1.34	0.46	Suntrust Home Developers Inc.	0.82	0.82	0.8	0.8	120.000
0.49	0.0875	Unilink Holdings Inc.	0.235	0.236	0.235	0.235	200.000
7.5	3.65	Vista Landscapes Inc.	5.8	5.9	5.7	5.9	11,085.000
MEDIA							
38.5	16.75	ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	33	33	32.5	32.5	16.000
12	7.8	GMA Holdings Inc.	7.9	8.3	7.9	8.1	512.000
11.75	7.5	GMA Network Inc.	7.9	7.8	7.8	7.8	488.000
1.03	0.8	Manila Bulletin Publishing Corp.	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	10.000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS							
2	1.1	Ugali Telecommunications Phil. Inc.	1.64	1.74	1.62	1.7	28,597.000
1,750.00	1,180.00	Globe Telecom Inc.	1,510.00	1,545.00	1,510.00	1,540.00	53.000
3,285.00	2,250.00	Phil. Long Distance Telephone Co	3,045.00	3,115.00	3,045.00	3,110.00	50.000
8	5.5	Philippine Telephone Corp.	7.3	7.5	7.3	7.5	4.000
MULTI-PURPOSE							
0.39	0.17	Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.19	0.9	0.9	0.9	800.000
18.8	2.1	Diversified Financial Network Inc.	18.25	15.25	14.75	15	1,285.000
11.3	3.55	IPVG Corp.	7.5	7.7	7.5	7.7	1,285.000
0.068	0.027	ISM Communications Corp.	0.038	0.038	0.038	0.038	3,100.000
5	1.82	Information Computer Tech. Ventures Inc.	3	3	3	3	20.000
0.32	0.05	Island Information & Technology Inc.	0.165	0.17	0.165	0.17	3,020.000
2.25	1.1	Musite Semiconductors Corp.	1.98	2.05	1.9	2.04	3,123.000
0.0725	0.03	Philweb Corp.	0.045	0.045	0.044	0.045	200.000
4.7	1.64	Philweb Corp.	2.16	2.34	2.34	2.34	210.000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES							
2.14	1.18	Abotit Transport System Corp.	1.28	1.28	1.26	1.26	25.000
8.8	3.8	Asian Terminals Inc.	4	4	4	4	4.000
49	19.75	Int'l Container Terminal Services Inc.	44	45	43.5	44	826.000
27	11.2	Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.000
HOTEL & RESORTS							
4.25	1.8	Luxury and Resorts World Corp.	2.38	2.38	2.24	2.28	9.000
4.55	2.9	Philippine Racing Club Inc.	3.5	3.5	3	3.35	18.000
1.52	0.33	Premiere Entertainment Prod. Inc.	1.24	1.24	1.2	1.2	1.000
1.2	0.55	Whitewater Philippines Inc.	0.79	0.79	0.79	0.79	1.000
MULTI-PURPOSE							
3.15	3.15		3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15
MULTI-PURPOSE							
8	2.04	MacroAsia Corp	4.75	5	4.75	4.95	644.000
17.25	9.6	Pacific Online Systems Corp.	10.75	10.75	10.5	10.5	5,052.000
30	5.3	Paves Inc.	6.3	6.5	6.1	6.2	800.000
MINING							
0.017	0.0085	Abra Mining and Industrial Corp.	0.0095	0.01	0.0095	0.01	41,000.000
7.2	3.6	Apex Mining Co. Inc. "A"	5.9	6	5.8	6	128.000
7.4	3.85	Apex Mining Co. Inc. "B"	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	1.000
21.25	8.1	Atlas Cons. Mining and Dev't Corp.	13.5	13.75	13.5	13.75	2,275.000
20.75	3.9	Benguet Corp. "A"	18.25	20	18	19.75	200.000
12.75	2.42	Dizon Copper Silver Mines Inc.	8.5	8.5	8	8.3	123.000
3.1	0.6	Economic Resources Philippines Inc.	1.84	1.88	1.82	1.82	23,845.000
0.58	0.18	Lapangan Consolidated Mining Co. "A"	0.48	0.5	0.48	0.5	32.400
0.81	0.22	Lapangan Consolidated Mining Co. "B"	0.49	0.51	0.49	0.51	52.500
30	3.8	MIRAD Minerals Resources Int'l Inc.	19.25	20.25	19	19.5	13.000
0.021	0.01	Orico Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	32.800
0.015	0.007	Orico Corp. - Warrants	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	12.600
3.4	3	Oriental Petroleum Resources Group	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.3	1.200
11.25	3.5	Philes Mining Corp.	9.2	9.4	9.2	9.3	1.200
1.7	0.99	Vulcan Industrial and Mining Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.000
ENERGY							
0.58	0.27	Basic Energy Corp.	0.3	0.31	0.3	0.31	5,360.000
0.029	0.011	Orical Pet. & Minerals Corp. "A"	0.023	0.024	0.023	0.024	198.300
0.03	0.011	Orical Pet. & Minerals Corp. "B"	0.024	0.026	0.024	0.026	53.200
129	11.75	PNOC Exploration Corp. "B"	31.75	31.75	31.75	31.75	30.000
13.78	0	Petrophil Resources Corp.	10	10	10	10	30.000
0.032	0.0088	The Philadelp Corp.	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	417.800
AVERAGES							
Financial		874.89 UP	17.16			265,490.00	
Industrial		4,49.37 UP	45.57			357,457.41	
Holding Firms		1,086.18 UP	58.22			354,614.78	
Property		1,522.82 UP	27.94			31	

Arbitration, special courts for big projects sought

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE EUROPEAN CHAMBER OF Commerce in the Philippines has asked the judiciary to stop trying cases involving business contracts that had already gone through successful arbitration, especially those worth at least P100 million.

ECCP executive vice president Henry Schumacher said in an interview that the current rules of court made alternative dispute resolution efforts futile.

"(ADR is) futile in the sense that for agreements resulting from arbitration to be legally enforced, the court still has to try the cases, going through the entire process (that was supposed to have been avoided

since arbitration is an out-of-court procedure)," Schumacher said.

"We have proposed to Chief Justice Reynato Puno that the rules be changed such that the courts should only (review and confirm) the arbitration results," he said.

The official added that the Supreme Court Administrator, Justice Presbitero J. Velasco Jr., had been tasked to take steps toward relevant changes in the Rules of Court.

Aside from the promotion of ADR, Schumacher said ECCP also proposed to the High Tribunal that special courts be formed and judges be trained to help avoid frivolous and long-drawn litigation on contracts that have a major impact on the

economy and on national development.

ECCP said in its proposal that projects that have a major impact on national development were those that amount to at least P100 million in terms of fees, royalties and actual investments.

In a 13-page document prepared with the help of the Policarpio, Pañgulyan and Azura Law Office, the ECCP lamented that once a dispute reaches the court, the case becomes a protracted legal battle that could last 10 or 20 years.

"This is because of the several layers or levels of courts where the litigants submit their claims and counterclaims as well as the practice that once a legal dispute is resolved

at the court of initial instance, it is always appealed to the collegial courts regardless of the merits of the appeal," ECCP said.

Schumacher clarified that ECCP's proposals concerned all three branches of the government and that it fostered interdepartment cooperation to address the concerns of the foreign business community on how to insulate contracts from protracted litigation.

Asked whether the group had some exemplary cases in mind when they were preparing the proposal, Schumacher said there was actually none.

But he did mention the case of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport's Terminal 3, which involved the German

firm Fraport AG

"Naia 3 is of course a special case, but the point is that it takes so much time to resolve a

dispute, which eventually causes delay or stoppage of important ventures," Schumacher said.

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Nasdaq firm bags contract to maintain PAF cargo plane

A NASDAQ-LISTED FIRM ANNOUNCED that the US government has awarded it a \$4.1-million (about P169 million) contract for the yearlong maintenance of a Philippine Air Force C-130 Hercules cargo plane.

MTC Technologies Inc., an Ohio-based provider of aircraft modernization and maintenance services, said in a statement posted on its website that the US Air Force had awarded the firm the "task order to perform programmed depot maintenance on a Philippine Air Force C-130 Hercules aircraft."

MTC said the one-year task order was awarded by the 561st Aircraft Sustainment Squadron, C-130 Technical Coordination Group at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia.

The company added that the single-source firm, fixed price and time and materials contract mandates MTC "to complete a depot-level maintenance cycle that includes equal interval inspections to bring the aircraft to full operational readiness."

MTC further explained that as the prime contractor, it would manage the work and provide technical and engineering support from its Aerospace Integration Division office in Warner Robins, Georgia while replacement and overhauled parts would be supplied by Kellstrom Industries of Miramar, Florida.

Hands-on maintenance would be done at the Clark International Airport, where Asian Aerospace Corp.—a unit of McDonnell Douglas—operates a facility that services C-130s.

"Completing this programmed depot maintenance activity and returning the aircraft to operational service will contribute significantly to the Philippine Air Force's airlift capability," said David Mitchell, MTC executive vice president.

"We intend to provide the best possible maintenance services in the shortest possible time," Mitchell added.

The C-130 is one of the PAF's more reliable work horses. PAF had 12 units in the 1970s, but was left with just one operational unit in 2001.

There are currently two operational C-130s with the refurbishment of another unit in 2006 through a \$4-million US Foreign Military Financing Program.

Malacñang is setting its sights on acquiring more C-130s as the aircraft proves useful in transporting troops as well as in civilian operations during natural calamities and other emergencies.

Recently, the C-130 brought 55 Higaonon farmers back to Bukidnon, from where they endured a 1,700-kilometer march to bring their case directly to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Ronnel W. Domingo

DA sets up eight 'food teams'

By Amy R. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE HAS set up eight teams to ensure the steady supply of basic food items in Metro Manila during calamities.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said the DA Food Teams would oversee the stable supply of rice, livestock and poultry, corn, vegetables, fruits, fish, sugar and coconut.

Headed by Agriculture Assistant Secretary Salvador S. Acapul, the groups would also strengthen the link between the farms and production centers and retail and wet markets in Metro Manila.

Directors Romeo Recido of the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics, Roy Abaya of the Field Operations Service and Francisco Ramos III of Agribusiness and Marketing were appointed vice team leaders.

As of Dec. 7 this year, the damage wrought by Typhoons "Lando" and "Mina" has already reached P854 million, with Region 2 or the Cagayan Valley incurring the biggest loss at P432 million.

Yap said, however, that production losses would only have a minimal impact on the overall growth target for Philippine agriculture in 2007.

In fact, Yap earlier said he was confident that the agriculture sector would surpass the 4.5-percent growth target for 2007.

The crop damages reported could not be considered a total loss as farms had already finished

main harvests of rice and corn, he explained.

With a few days to go before the year ends, Yap said he hoped that the country would be spared from further tropical cyclones.

Meanwhile, Yap assured the public that increases in the prices of basic commodities would be limited to 3-5 percent.

"We don't see any reason why prices would skyrocket since the situation is artificial and not due to real lack of food. Any increases would be due to temporary, periodic disruptions in deliveries," he said.

Yap had also secured commitments from industry leaders to keep prices of other commodities, notably sugar and meat, relatively stable during the holidays.

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Amex sees peso at 40 to \$1 in 12 months

Stock market expected to continue posting strong growth next year

By Doris C. Dumiao

AMERICAN EXPRESS BANK SEES A MORE modest peso appreciation next year, projecting the local currency to firm up at 40 to a US dollar in 12 months.

It also expects another year of strong stock market performance across Asia's emerging markets.

In its global outlook for 2008, the London-based global economics unit of Amex said the US dollar was already very weak against the euro and most currencies other than the Japanese yen and the Chinese renminbi.

If the United States were to avoid an economic recession, Amex said an increase in the Federal Reserve overnight rates could be expected, thereby allowing the US dollar to recover.

"The US economic outlook is highly uncertain at present with recession risk probably at 40-50 percent. We still expect that Fed rate cuts and an easing of the financial crisis will help to avoid a full-blown recession but growth will be slow," Amex said.

But in a US recession scenario, Amex said the euro would likely surge to new highs and the yen would likewise rise against the dollar, with "carry trades" drying up.

Carry trades refer to the global investors' practice of borrowing from low-interest rate countries like Japan to invest in higher yielding markets like the Philippines and other emerging economies in Asia.

"Capital inflow should also remain strong if, as we expect, emerging equities rally further, while the easing in oil prices, which we also forecast, should be supportive as well," Amex said.

"In addition, governments are likely to

allow faster foreign appreciation to help curb overheating pressures and to limit the extent to which domestic interest rates have to rise," it said.

Overheating refers to a situation of spiraling inflation rate in a period of strong economic expansion.

With the inflation rate in China accelerating, for instance, Amex said an 8 percent renminbi appreciation was likely next year, faster than the 6 percent gain this year.

"Elsewhere in Asia, all currencies should rise further but forex rates in countries where GDP (gross domestic product) growth is most led by domestic demand will likely rise the most," it said. India and the Philippines, along with the rest of Southeast Asia, are among the economies where domestic demand is a major economic driver.

For next year, Amex also expects the Philippine GDP to grow by 6.3 percent from this year's 6.8 percent, in line with the slower global growth.

"Japan and Europe have already slowed but provided a US recession is avoided, their upswing should continue," Amex said.

"Emerging countries still present a good picture overall led by strong growth in China and India and in most oil and commodity producers," it added.

"Emerging equities especially Asia and Latin America should also perform well for another year. Valuations have moved up above developed market levels but economic growth should stay strong and better policies have significantly reduced the variability of GDP growth and corporate profits," Amex said. "In addition, likely continued currency appreciation should amplify the return for US-based investors," it said.



FOREIGN tourists bound for Boracay disembark from the maiden flight of Island Holidays, the leisure brand of Air Philippines, on its arrival in Caticlan recently. A troupe of Ati-Athian dancers, native to the place, added a dash of local color to the festive welcome for the passengers. Island Holidays flies five times daily between Manila and Caticlan using brand-new 50-seater Bombardier Q300 turbo-prop aircraft. The airline also operates an air-conditioned waiting lounge for its passengers at the Caticlan air terminal.

Basic Energy selling shares

By E.S. Lacson

LISTED BASIC Energy Corp. is seeking approval from corporate regulators for its plan to sell additional shares.

The company said it was expecting to raise P2 billion from the offering of 5.5 billion new shares at P0.38 per share for its bioethanol and renewable energy projects.

In a statement, Basic Energy said it had filed an application with the Philippine Stock Exchange and the Securities and Exchange Commission for its "follow-on" offer.

The company is planning to put up initially two fully integrated bioethanol plants.

BDO Capital & Investment Corp. was named the lead underwriter.

Basic Energy recently branched out to alternative fuels and renewable energy.

Earlier, the SEC approved an increase in the company's authorized capital stock from 2 billion shares to 10 billion shares.

Philippine Shell Petroleum Corp. earlier signed an agreement with Basic Energy for the supply of up to 50 million liters of bioethanol yearly.

According to Basic Energy chair Josue A. Camba Jr., the company will be operating fully integrated bioethanol plants with dedicated sugar cane farms which will give the company a comparative advantage in terms of feedstock cost.

"This will allow us to lower the cost of our production of bioethanol," Camba said.

Deal on coconut industry dev't program signed

By Amy R. Remo

THE COCONUT INDUSTRY INVESTMENT Fund Oil Mills Group and the Federation of Free Farmers have signed an agreement to implement the Coconut Farm Development Program.

Aimed at boosting the competitiveness of the local coconut industry, the program will promote efficient, competitive and sustainable coconut farming systems.

The Department of Agriculture said the program had four main components: the establishment of nurseries; coconut intercropping; coconut value-adding, and the operation of agribusiness service kiosks.

The program seeks to ensure the substantial supply of coconut/copra to meet the yearly demand of CILF Oils Mills Group amounting to 867 metric tons a year.

Under the program, livelihood, employment and income opportunities will be provided to small coconut farmers and their families.

In the meantime, the CILF Oils Mills Group, a private association of accredited oil mills nationwide, has tapped several networks of farmers' organizations to assist in the implementation of the program at the ground level.

To open up alternative markets and allow coconut farmers to receive higher returns, farm production from the CFDP-funded projects will be consolidated through the Agribiz Group, which will be linked to institutional buyers and markets both here and abroad.

This method will also ensure that the CFDP will be sustainable and its success replicated in other parts of the country.

Prior to this agreement, the CILF Oil Mills Group had signed a memorandum of understanding with small coconut farmers co-operatives/organizations, nongovernment organizations, educational institutions and local government units to form a national network called FFR-CFDP, which will implement the coconut program.

Seaoil readies aggressive expansion plan

By Abigail L. Ho

IN PREPARATION FOR ITS INITIAL PUBLIC offering in the first quarter of 2008, Seaoil Philippines Inc. plans to open another 128 stations next year, in addition to the 154 stations that are already in operation.

Seaoil president Glenn Yu said the move was aimed at addressing the proliferation of illegal refilling stations in many areas in the country. He said many of the new stations would be put up in underserved areas.

"The country is still very much underserved. We're in the stage of expanding into areas that are presently underserved. These are where the problem of *bote-bote*, *balde-balde* and drum-drum is most rampant," he told the Inquirer, referring to the practice

of selling fuel by the bottle, pail or drum.

He said there were places, particularly in the provinces, that have very few refilling stations.

"These areas are where the *bote-bote* practice is most prevalent. We've proven that this problem can be solved by opening stations that could serve the people's fuel needs," he said.

In 2008, Yu said Seaoil planned to open 126 new stations, 29 percent of which would be located in Metro Manila, 27 percent in Mindanao, 19 percent in Northern Luzon, 13 percent in the Visayas and 12 percent in Southern Luzon.

Of these planned 126 stations, 43 are now in various stages of construction, he said.

In an earlier interview, he said Seaoil planned to expand its retail network to more

than 500 stations by 2011, using proceeds from its IPO in the first quarter of next year.

Each station would cost around P20 million, he said.

The oil firm expects to raise P2.5 billion to P3 billion from its IPO.

"We believe there's still a lot of growth in the downstream industry, so that's where we're concentrating. The high growth area is in the expansion of our retail network. We'll have to identify areas with strong vehicle sales growth and at far-flung areas where there are hardly any stations," Seaoil chief financial officer Mark Yu earlier said.

Portion of the IPO proceeds would also be used to make the company's operations more cost-efficient and to further build the company's brand image, Yu said.

Gov't debt servicing expense down by 25%

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S DEBT servicing expenses dropped by 25 percent in the first 11 months of the year.

Data from the Department of Finance showed that the government paid P590.78 billion in maturing obligations in January to November, down from the P784.48 billion recorded in the same period last year.

Finance officials said the strengthening of the peso trimmed down the peso equivalent of the government's foreign-currency denominated debts. The peso averaged 42.798 to a US dollar in the first 11 months of this year compared to the 49.763 to a dollar in the same period last year.

The government also reported a turnaround in its budget position. From a deficit of P58.3 billion in January to November last year, it posted a P12.6-billion budget surplus in the same period this year.

The improved fiscal condition reduced the government's need for borrowings, as fresh loans were tapped only for the payment of maturing liabilities and not anymore to plug a deficit. The drop in borrowings, particularly short-term ones, resulted in the decline in debt servicing expenses.

The amount of debts paid in the first 11 months of the year accounted for 57 per-

cent of the P1.044 trillion in revenue generated by the government during the period.

Of the P590.78 billion in debts paid during the period, interest charges accounted for P255.14 billion or 43 percent while principal debts amounted to P335.637 billion or 57 percent.

In terms of loan sources, P425.01 billion or 72 percent was paid to domestic creditors while P165.77 billion or 28 percent went to foreign lenders.

The government borrows locally through the issuance of treasury bills and bonds while foreign funds are raised through the sale of sovereign bonds in the international market and borrowings from foreign lending institutions, including official development assistance.

The country's biggest sources of ODAs are the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

Government economic managers said the improving fiscal condition would continue to trim the share of debt servicing to total revenue, thereby allowing more room in the government budget for infrastructure and social services.

The government has set a target of increasing its spending for infrastructure to 5

percent of the country's gross domestic product and be at par with those in neighboring countries. Currently, the government spends an amount equivalent to 3 percent of GDP for infrastructure. Michelle V. Remo

GOINGS-ON

38th Robinson's Bank opens

ROBINSONS BANK, a wholly owned subsidiary of the JG Summit Group, recently opened its 38th branch along with its 65th ATM at Level 1 Robinsons Place Angeles, McArthur Highway, Balibago, Angeles City. The establishment of the new office is part of the bank's expansion program as it marks its 10th founding anniversary.

RSB is scheduled to open more branches and ATMs in early 2008.

Auction.ph hits 1M members

AUCTION.PH, a local online shopping mall, said its membership had surpassed the 1-million mark.

To celebrate the milestone, Auction.ph earlier launched a page showcasing "great discounts and marvelous items."

The online event page features gadgets and various electronic items; fashion for women that include clothes, accessories, cosmetics and fragrances; and a cyber sale offering the best and lowest priced computers and accessories.

Through member-operating promos and online events, the website achieved a 266-percent membership increase in the third quarter of this year. The average number of page views daily also rose by more than 100 percent from 93,675 in the second quarter to 188,897 in the third quarter.

Life insurer of the year

MANULIFE has been named Life Insurance Company of the Year at the Annual Insurance Review Awards 2007 for its "continued commitment to professionalism, excellent customer service and innovation with first-to-market products." The company received the award in a ceremony held in Singapore early last month.

Winners are voted for by leading professionals in Asia's insurance industry. Manulife now operates in 10 countries and territories in Asia with a 25,000-strong agency force and an expanded distribution network of 50 distribution agencies with banks and securities dealers—all serving nearly 5 million Manulife customers in the region.

Danvil's 24-hour free look

DANVIL PLANS Inc. (formerly Berkeley) has implemented a 24-hour free look for its products, with no questions asked.

Customers purchasing Danvil's educational plans now have more time to scrutinize the products and their features and determine their suitability to the customers' needs and situation.

Many first-time buyers in the pre-need industry admit to not fully understanding the nitty-gritty of the product that they bought, especially the so-called fine prints of the contracts that they sign. The 24-hour free look, according to Danvil Plans, will address this problem and give clients sufficient time to review their commitment and back out if they so want within the allowed period.

Neda approves P28.5B worth of projects

By Michelle V. Remo

SOME P28.5 BILLION WORTH OF AGRICULTURE and infrastructure projects were approved by the board of the National Economic and Development Authority for funding through official development assistance.

The approved followed pronouncements from economic managers that the government would increase spending for infrastructure and social services now that its fiscal condition has improved.

One of the approved projects to be financed through ODA is the Agrarian Reform Communities Project (ARCP II) to be implemented by the Department of Agrarian Reform. The project costs an estimated P8.65 billion, and covers activities that will improve productivity of farmers and teach them how to better access financing.

ARCP II will be funded by the Asian Development Bank and will be implemented

starting 2008 for a period of six years.

"The project aims to increase income of agrarian reform beneficiaries and improve their quality of life in a sustainable manner," the Neda said in a statement.

Another approved project is the Second Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project (CHARMP II), which will be implemented by the Department of Agriculture.

Under CHARMP II, farmers in the Cordillera Administrative Region will learn how to engage in sustainable farming and conserve natural resources. The project is also expected to help secure land tenure by formulating the so-called "Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development Protection Plans."

The project covers 37 municipalities in the region's six provinces: Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga and the Mountain Province.

CHARMP II costs P3.06 billion and will be implemented from 2008 to 2014. The project will also be financed by the Asian

Development Bank.

The third project is the "Participatory Irrigation Development Project" that is worth P5.11 billion. The project will be implemented until 2011 by the National Irrigation Administration.

This involves major rehabilitation of 14 national irrigation systems and minor rehabilitation of another 44 national irrigation systems.

The last project approved is the "GMA Ports Project" to be implemented jointly by the Department of Transportation and Communication and the Philippine Ports Authority.

The project involves the nationwide establishment and enhancement of 70 roll-on/roll-off (Roro) ports and costs P11.78 billion. Of the amount, P10.33 billion will be funded by an ODA from the Spanish government and the balance of P1.45 billion will be provided by the national government as counterpart funding.

The GMA Ports Project will be implemented over a four-year period starting 2008.

PSBank avails of BIR's tax amnesty

By Doris C. Dumlaog

PHILIPPINE SAVINGS BANK, the thrift bank unit of the Metrobank group, has availed of the Bureau of Internal Revenue's tax amnesty program, paying P266 million in dues.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, PSBank president Pascual Garcia III said the thrift bank had taken on the government's amnesty program to hedge against "potential risks emanating from unresolved tax issues."

The P266-million tax amnesty fee that PSBank paid last Dec. 21 represented 5 percent of its net worth as of calendar year 2005.

Under the amnesty program, taxpayers pay fees to acquire immunity from pending and possible tax assessments covering 2005 and prior taxable years.

"PSBank would like to underscore that it has not been the recipient of any unfavorable decision by the country's tax courts," Garcia said.

PSBank has been one of the top 1000 corporate taxpayers in the country for the past several years, contributing an average of P787 million in annual taxes from January 2004 to November 2007.

"(PSBank's) tax practices have been proper, despite a number of issues that affect the banking industry," Garcia said.

He added that the bank stood to gain from Republic Act 9498, the recently passed tax amnesty law—a move that would outweigh initial financial costs.

Moody's set to review RP's credit rating

By Michelle V. Remo

OFFICIALS FROM MOODY'S INVESTORS Service will visit the Philippines in January to assess the country's fiscal climate and review its credit ratings after the government posted an unusual budget surplus in November.

Moody's representatives will meet with officials of the Department of Finance and other economic managers on Jan. 9 to discuss the government's fiscal performance.

"Maybe there is a chance that the country will get an upgrade in its credit rating with Moody's, or at least an improved outlook," a DOF official told reporters.

The official cannot be named because of the government's unwritten policy to avoid preempting credit rating firms in their decision.

Among the major international credit rating companies, Moody's is considered the most pessimistic. The Philippines' rating with Moody's currently stands at four notches below investment grade.

But in November last year, Moody's raised its outlook on the Philippines from "negative" to "stable" after the gov-

ernment succeeded in drastically reducing its budget deficit.

The government registered a deficit of P64.8 billion last year, much better than the target of limiting the budget gap to P125 billion.

Moody's and other credit rating agencies are expected to review the country's credit ratings and outlook after the government's fiscal condition continued to improve this year.

Last November, the government posted a record budget surplus of P54.1 billion following the sale of its remaining 60-percent stake in PNOC-Energy Development Corp. for P58.5 billion.

This brought the budget position in the first 11 months of the year to a surplus of P12.6 billion.

With the budget of the first 11 months at a surplus, the government stands a chance to balance its budget for the entire year, Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said.

Should this happen, the government will be a year ahead of its target of balancing the budget by 2008.

The government hoped to limit its deficit to P63 billion this year, according to the 2007 fiscal program.

US keen on opening market for this banana republic

By Amy R. Remo

THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of Agriculture has assured the Philippines that it would speed up the process of pest risk analysis for Philippine bananas—a move that is expected to boost the country's export earnings by \$6 million a year.

"Opening Philippine bananas to an important market such as the US will send a positive signal to our small farmers to diversify into high value crop production," Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said last week.

Creating a new market would aid the livelihood of farmers in Mindanao where much of the exports are sourced, Yap added.

In a bilateral meeting last month, Yap said USDA Acting Secretary Chuck Conner had assured him that the USDA would move "to expeditiously conduct the pest risk analysis

for Philippine bananas."

Philippine bananas are traditionally exported to Japan, Iran and Korea.

Private sector players in the local banana industry have earlier sent a request to the Department of Agriculture to initiate the process of penetrating the lucrative US market.

The United States currently sources its banana requirements from Ecuador, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Colombia.

Yap said the DA targets to raise banana exports by 7.9 percent this year, translating into some \$475 million in export earnings in 2007.

Banana production, which reached 6.801 million metric tons last year, is expected to increase by 543,420 MT in 2007 to 7.345 million MT.

The DA also expects to create over 35,000 new jobs from its ongoing program to beef up production and sales of bananas this year.

RP seen to cash in on telcos' fortunes

By Riza T. Olchondra

TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANIES, notably leaders Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) and Globe Telecom Inc., expect more profits this year because of a general improvement in the economy.

But analysts dispute this claim, saying that it works the other way around.

According to analysts, a 10-percent growth in the telecommunications industry of a developing country boosts the growth rate of its gross domestic product by 0.6 percentage points a year, said Joe Doering, head of the Asia South region of Nokia Siemens Networks.

The effect is even larger, based on the reckoning of Aus-

tralia-based research firm Paul Budde Communication. The telecommunications sector in the Philippines has been contributing over 10 percent to the country's gross domestic product (GDP), boosted considerably by the booming mobile segment, the firm said in a report.

Different studies may have varying numbers, but the consensus is that growing investments and revenue in telecommunications propels the economy forward more than the other way around, said Steven Tai, Nokia's customer marketing officer for the Asia South subregion.

"The belief that telecommunications companies benefit from a good economy is also true," Tai said. "But what is emerging from different studies

worldwide is that the cycle of growth starts with telecommunications and technology-based industries. They fuel other industries, such as outsourcing companies, and push economic growth which, in turn, helps them become more profitable, and the cycle goes on.

"That's why it is important for telecommunications to continue to invest and innovate."

Sustained growth in cellular and data services improved the profitability of PLDT and Globe in the first nine months of 2007.

PLDT posted a core net profit of P26.2 billion, up 13 percent from P23.2 billion a year earlier.

Also, for the first three quarters of the year, Globe's net income improved by four percent to P9.7 billion.

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Saan ka ba nakatira?

- Tony Meloto, Gawad Kalinga

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Veracruz—driving excitement upsized

THERE'S A BIG, BOLD WORLD out there. How do you want to journey in it? You can take the safe route and be predictable. But you can also dare the open road and walk tall—or better yet, run tall on fours—with the Veracruz. With its upsized luxury and power, taking on the world's great challenges are not so much of a big deal after all.

With its towering stance, sleek lines, massive curvaceous front, and HID headlamps, the Veracruz instantly commands attention, while inside, unbridled elegance seduces you with its rich leather interior coupled with tasteful metallic complements. Slip into the cockpit and appreciate the Integrated Memory System (IMS) that can

memorize two driving positions, including steering wheel, seat configuration and exterior mirror that flexibly adjust to your preferred driving position, while the blue-illuminated instrument panel hints of its sporty affiliation.

A host of conveniences and power features are well-within reach in the Veracruz and space is likewise abundant. Driver and front passenger seats are power adjustable with third row seats capable of a 50:50 split fold, recline functions and have adjustable headrests, translating to maximum passenger comfort. The second row seats on the other hand fold 60:40 and slide easily forward to allow third row accessibility.

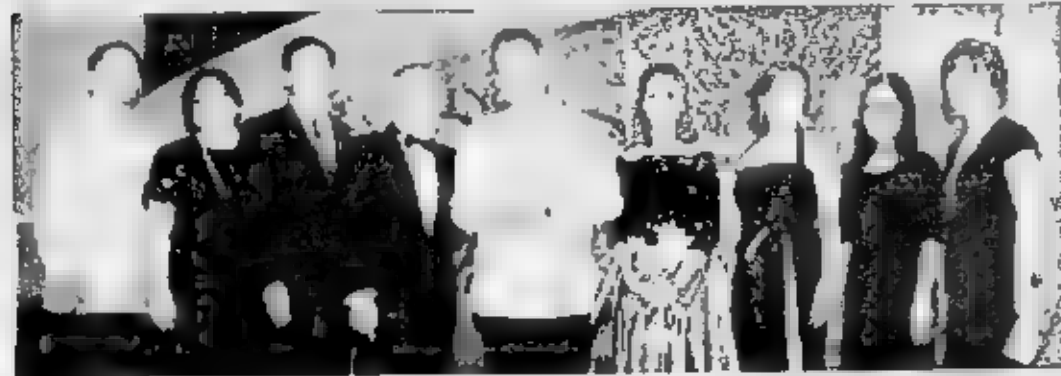
Or, fold away all rear seats and have a full area of cargo space at your disposal.

The Veracruz also takes you keyless with the Smart Key which lets you step up to the door and it opens with the press of a button. It also lets you turn the ignition knob without even inserting the key. Other thoughtful power features include Auto Light Control, Rain Sensing Wipers, Power Sunroof, and Power Tailgate that effortlessly take your worries off the minute details of your journey, while putting the privilege of convenience at a premium.

At the forefront of diesel engine technology is the 3.0 liter V6 CRDi E-VGT engine that powers the Veracruz. Remarkably quiet and frugal on fuel, this diesel power plant delivers 240ps and 46kg.m of torque, making the Veracruz one of the most high-performing diesel-powered SUVs in its class. Torque on Demand Electronic 4WD system with 4WD lock mode, traction control, ABS with EBD, and ESP put the stability of the Veracruz in optimum control. Adding up to its safety profile are front, side and curtain airbags, immobilizer, back warning system and big, wide tires to keep a firm grip on the road.

Because the world holds surprises larger than expected, go big on the power gear and up the ante in driving excitement with the Veracruz.

For more inquiries about the Veracruz or to schedule a test drive, visit the nearest authorized Hyundai dealership



FINEX AND ING BANK AWARD PHILIPPINES' FIRST CFO OF THE YEAR

The Philippines' premier financial institutions, led by the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines (Finex) and ING Bank NV Manila, named the first ever recipient of the prestigious CFO of the Year Award. Finex and ING Bank Manila awarded Globe Telecom senior vice president and chief finance officer Deffin Gonzalez Jr the Philippines' first CFO of the Year. Finex and ING Bank Manila honored Gonzalez in a ceremony at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati City. The Globe Telecom executive was awarded a glass sculpture trophy designed by internationally acclaimed Filipino artist

Ramon Orlina. The ceremony was attended by Finex officers and members, local and regional executives of ING Bank, the country's top business executives and finance professionals, and special guests. The event's keynote remarks were delivered by Malcolm Brown, ING Bank country managing director for China and Hong Kong. The annual CFO of the Year Award was jointly undertaken by Finex and ING Bank Manila to give due recognition to finance professionals whose positions in the corporate organization have gained prominence. An acknowledged leader in banking, asset management and insurance, ING Bank Manila is the leading foreign bank in terms of total assets under management and 4th overall in the industry. Finex is the premier professional organiza-

tion for finance, financial services executives, and decision makers in Philippine business government, the academe, and professional services. Manuel Saez III, ING Bank Manila country manager, said, "The importance of the CFO of the Year Award goes beyond providing deserved recognition for the individual who receives the award. By recognizing the winning CFO of the Year we underscore the values, skills and characteristics that are important, so that other CFOs and younger finance professionals can learn from his success in the profession." Shown are, from left, Albert Gamboa, Mignon Ramos, Dave Balangue, Vic Dela Dingo, Chito Gonzalez, Rosanna Guito, Tere Jesusdason, Bay Cabrera, and Puri Gonzalez.

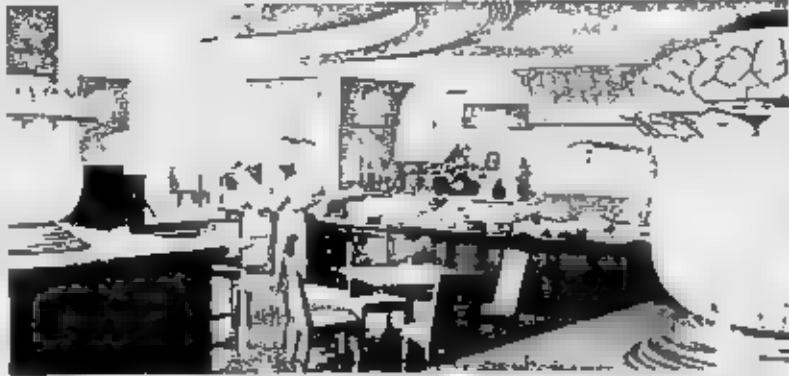
'Prices of '94' promo at The Renaissance Makati

RENAISSANCE MAKATI CITY Hotel, Manila (formerly the New World Renaissance Hotel) bids farewell to its Coffee Shop with its "Prices of '94", a three-day promotion from Dec. 28 to 30, in which all food and beverage items are priced as they were in 1994, the year when the deluxe hotel opened. The "Prices of '94" includes: breakfast, lunch and dinner buffets; all a la carte menu selections, and beverages.

Memorable menu items offered in 1994 will be available such as the popular cheesecake burger at P103, well-loved ice-

cream cheesecake at P52, Ox-tail with Red Wine Sauce at P103, Chicken Tortillas at P73, among other nostalgic dishes. The abundant lunch and dinner buffets will be at P480 while the breakfast buffet will be at P395.

The Coffee Shop of the Renaissance Makati City Hotel will close its doors and evolve into an all-day dining restaurant which will be a modern lifestyle dining venue revolving around great food. The grand opening for the stylish restaurant and the new lobby lounge are slated for the second quarter of 2008.



RENAISSANCE Makati City Hotel's Coffee Shop closes its doors for good. In its place will open a stylish lifestyle dining venue offering great food.

For more information and reservations, call the Renaissance Makati City Hotel, Manila at 811-6888.

PHRS launches travel website for tourists

PHILIPPINE HOTEL RESERVATIONS SERVICE, the country's first and only central hotel reservations hotline, has just launched its new website with the most complete and comprehensive information about the Philippines as a premier tourist destination. The website features 13 major locations informing guests on where to go, what to see and where to stay.

The Hotel Directory lists specific hotel information, room types and rates at over

400 hotels in Cebu, Boracay, Palawan, Bohol, Baguio, and many more—depending on the guest's preferred location and budget.

The website is perfect for local travelers who tend to travel in bigger groups as the site can offer hotels that can accommodate any group size. Even corporate or business travelers will love the quick and easy search buttons and hotel pop-ups for their every travel destination. Other great features on the site include a live chat room, where

guests can chat online with an expert travel consultant; a travel story section where one can read travel related articles and stories; and a travel forum section where guests can post general or specific questions or post own experiences to share with others.

Experience and enjoy the beauty and nature of the Philippines. See it for yourself! Visit www.philippinehotelreservations.com, or call hotline 812-PHRS (7477).

Skin on the go with New Jergens Moisturizer 25ml bottle

THESE DAYS, MODERN LIFESTYLE IS ALL about moving fast and traveling light. Everything you need is small enough to fit snugly inside a tiny purse—your cell phone, compact, wallet, you name it. Some beauty essentials like moisturizers are often left at home because they won't fit in your bag.

But let's face it, you can't go to a client meeting with flaky, dry skin. So it's a choice between having dry skin or noting that messy, half-opened lotion sachet in your bag. While you're on the daily commute going to and fro, it's glowing health and being beautiful that tops off a power look. Traveling dries up your skin faster than you realize, so it's necessary to have a moisturizer you can use anytime, anywhere.

The Jergens skincare experts bring you



the new Jergens Moisturizer 25ml bottle. With the perfect combination of size and convenience, the new Jergens Moisturizer 25ml bottle is small enough for you to bring wherever you go without ending up with a messed-up bag, with its spill-proof, flip-top cap. Choose from three of your favorite Jergens Moisturizer variants: Jergens Original Scent Cherry-Almond Moisturizer, Jergens Ultra Healing Extra Dry Skin Moisturizer and Jergens Age Defying Multi-Vitamin

Moisturizer.

Get great skin that's always on the go, with the new Jergens Moisturizer 25ml bottle, available at all supermarkets, drugstores and convenience stores nationwide. To know more about the Jergens brand, log on to www.jergens.com.

Coffee table books on sale

FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON, TOWER Book House is holding a mini-book fair of Filipino books ongoing until Dec. 30 at Windsor Tower, 163 Legaspi Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City. Among the books being sold at discounted prices are "The Hocos Heritage" in coffee table book edition and "Cultural Icons of the Philippines" in coffee table book edition. The book is divided into several categories: a) material objects from nature b) food and beverage/drinks c) tourist destinations d) cultural practices or traditions, and e) personalities from heroes to cultural divas to sports and pop icons. Other books are "The Barong Tagalog: The Millennium Edition" in coffee table book edition, "Churches of Pangasinan" in coffee table book edition, "Grace and Magic (soul book)", "The Filipino Child: Images and Insights", "The Heart Has Its Reasons", "Advertising in the Philippines", and "Where Romance and Art Are Bound". For details, call 815-4938/815-6925 or e-mail: childea-torres@yahoo.com



NEW SCHOOL BUILDING FOR TONDO KIDS

Business tycoon Lucio G. Tan (left) and Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim (right) formally inaugurate a two-classroom building donated by the tycoon to the Emilio Jacinto Elementary School in Tondo, Manila. The two-classroom building is part of the six-classroom package do-

nated by members of the Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc. (FFCCCI) under its Operation Barrio School Building Project. Witnessing the ribbon cutting ceremony is FFCCCI president John Tan (center).



ALASKA SUPPORTS MARICEL'S 'BAHAY KUBO'

Alaska Powdered Filled Milk proudly sponsors the movie of its celebrity endorser Maricel Soriano, "Bahay Kubo". Regal Films' entry to the 29th Metro Manila Film Festival, "Bahay Kubo" is a heart-melting dramedy comedy-drama about Eden

played by Maricel, a headstrong yet caring woman who diligently shows her motherly affection by fostering orphans. Under the direction of Grand Slam filmmaker Joel Lamangan, "Bahay Kubo" is now a must-see.



Engr. Bienvenido V. Buencamino, Sr.

October 2, 1927 – December 25, 2007

His loving wife Consuelo "Mona" Calupitan; children Bembot & Connie, Peach, Charley & Joy, Anton, Angel & Rory, Bobby & Mylene, Ricky & Heidi, Bong & Grace; grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Arlington Memorial Chapels, Inc. #12 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on December 30, 2007 at the Buencamino Mausoleum, San Miguel Municipal Cemetery, San Miguel, Bulacan.

To the grandest Mother of all,
who gave us her time joyfully,
her love generously,
her smile warmly...
We love you very much

Rosalia Magno Salcedo

peacefully joined our Creator
on December 22, 2007
at the age of 88

She is survived by her three daughters and their families
Marilyn & Gerry Teotico, Lizette and Mae
Gracie & Tony Aranda, Gidget, Angelle and Abby
Telly & Larry Martinez, Steven and Lauren

Her remains lie in state at Sta. Maria Della Strada Parish,
Katipunan Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be held on Saturday, Dec. 29, 2007
at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City
after the 8:00 am mass at Sta. Maria Della Strada.

Her family requests relatives, friends and the pious readers
to join them in prayers for the eternal repose of her soul

YOLANDA "YOLY" C. TIOSEJO

December 5, 1927 – December 26, 2007

peacefully joined our Creator and her husband PAQUITO
at the age of 80.

Her loving children WINNIE, MARISSA & BOY CABRERA, GINA & ANDY CUA,
CHERRY & CHOT REYES, grandchildren, nephews & nieces, other relatives and
friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Santuario de San Jose, Greenhills.

Cremation will be on Saturday, December 29, 2007 at the Manila Memorial Park,
Parañaque. There will be a Mass at 9:00 a.m. and burial of ashes will follow.

"Eternal life will
swallow up that
which can die. God
made us for this
very reason and
He has given us
the Spirit as a
guarantee that we
will live again."
—2 Corinthians 5:4-5

Our Dearly Beloved ATTY. RAUL E. ESPINOSA

Now rests in the infinite warmth and embrace of our Lord. He joined our Creator on
the 25th day of December 2007 at the age of 70.

His bereaved wife REGGIE, daughter JOHANNA, sisters LUISA, VESTA (?),
AURORA (?), and all his relatives and friends request your prayers for the eternal
repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Don Bosco Chapel, Passay Rd., Makati City.

Final resting place will be at Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque on Sunday,
December 30, 2007 after the 2:00 p.m. Mass at Don Bosco Chapel.

Death Notice

ATTY. JOSE "TEPOK" ANTONIO PASTOR

Died on Dec. 21, 2007

His body lies at their residence in Lasag City

Interment will be on Dec. 29, 2007

INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:

- Copy of Death Certificate
- Any identification document (I.D.)

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NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed
with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National/Citizenship	Position
INTER ISLAND RESORTS & SERVICES, INC. Old Terminal, Domestic Rd., Passay City	Ibrahim Sharifkulov Russian	Aviation Commercial & Technical Consultant
BENTER N CUTTER MACHINERY CORPORATION Warehouse 2 Blossoms Cmpd., Km. 25 West Service Rd., Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Hyejo Shin Korean	Computer Graphic Artist
HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL INC. 42 Ponce St., San Lorenzo Village, Makati City	Oliver Cyprian Fabre French	Operational Coordinator

If you have any information/objection to the above mentioned application/s
please communicate with the Regional Director.

RAYMUNDO G. AGRAVANTE
OIC, Regional Director

• PDI-December 27, 2007



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PAMBANSANG PANGASIWAAN NG PATUBIG
(National Irrigation Administration)
Bancasi, Butuan City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Irrigation Administration, CARAGA, Regional Office,
Butuan City through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites
contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine
Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and if
found eligible, to bid for the hereunder contract

Name of Contract : Lateral D Canal Concrete Lining
Location : Bancasi and Dumaiagan, Butuan City
Brief Description : Excavation, Trimming and Concreting of
Canal Including Coarse Sand Bedding
Approved Budget : P 8,407,148.52
for the Contract
Contract Duration : 180 Calendar Days

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB License applicable
to the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at
least 50% of the ABC, have key personnel and equipment (listed in
the eligibility forms) available for the prosecution of the contract. The
BAC will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the Eligibility
Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids. The
BAC will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid
Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation
of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed
by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules
and Regulations (IRR).

The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility Forms at the
Regional Office, Bancasi, Butuan City upon their submission of LOI,
and upon their payment of a non-refundable amount of P 500.00 to
the cashier of the National Irrigation Office, Bancasi, Butuan City,
starting on January 3, 2008. Prospective bidders shall submit the
Eligibility Requirements to the BAC at the said address. They may
also obtain the results of the Eligibility Check by the BAC at the same
address.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to bidders declared by
the BAC to be eligible for the bidding, upon payment of a non-
refundable amount of P 5,000.00 to the cashier of the National
Irrigation Administration, Bancasi, Butuan City.

The National Irrigation Administration, Regional Office, Bancasi,
Butuan City, assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate
or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of
their bids.

Approved by:
(Sgd.) MEDEL P. MAWILE
BAC Chairman

Noted:
(Sgd.) DEMOCRATICO P. GRANA, JR., CESO V
Regional Manager

(PDI – December 26 & 27, 2007)

Pres. Erap inducts 2008 Rebap National Officers

HIS EXCELLENCY FORMER PRES
Joseph E. Estrada will be the Guest of
Honor and Speaker on the 28th An-
niversary celebration of the Real Es-
tate Brokers Association of the Philip-
pines (REBAP), Inc., an association of
Professional Certified Real Estate li-
censed brokers with more than 500
members practicing nationwide. The
induction today, Dec. 27 at the Club
Filipino, Greenhills, San Juan.

Highlights of the celebration will be
the induction of newly elected 2008
National Officers headed by National

Chairman Emily Q. Duterte and Na-
tional President Julius G. Topacio with
the rest of its powerhouse officers and
members of the board with His Excel-
lency Former Pres. Estrada as its Induct-
ing officer. "Rebap 1: Soaring High" is
the 2008 REBAP Organization's Theme
under the new leadership following the
successful performance and achieve-
ments of the past administration fully
supported by its Chapter Officers and
members that gave greater heights to
what Rebap is now.

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spanillo@inquirer.com.ph

Xtreme Career Expo starts today

JOIN THE EPERFORMAX
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the company's efforts to
strengthen its employee referral
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exceptional careers,
Eperformax, one of the
country's most stable call center
companies based in Buendia,
Makati City, is holding a post-
Christmas job fair dubbed as
"Xtreme Career Expo". The job
fair will be on Dec. 27-28, from
10 a.m. - 7 p.m. at the Trade
Hall (near the food court area)
of StarMall Edsa in Shaw Blvd.,
Mandaluyong City.

The said event aims to recruit
call center agents for the
different Eperformax clients

and have them start training on
Jan. 2, 2008. In addition to
extending the holiday cheer by
employing more people,
Eperformax will also give a
post-Christmas bonus to all
applicants who will be hired
during the 2-day job fair

Eperformax Contact Centers
is a privately held corporation
established through a
partnership formed between
Performance Consulting Group
of the U.S. and Transnational
Diversified Group (TDG) of the
Philippines

For more information,
contact 490-2088 loc. 6823/
09178546149. Or email:
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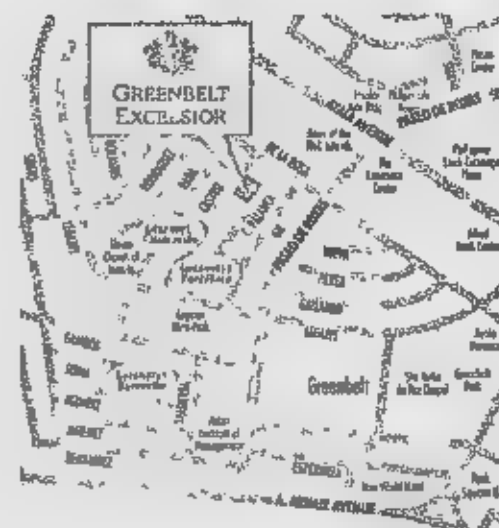


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MEGAWORLD CORPORATION

IN THIS ISSUE

■ Witty and tasty cupcakes /C4

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Banal-Fernando

sms feedback: inquire life name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) and 386 (Smart) or email us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

IN THIS ISSUE

■ Recipes galore /D3



MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY 2BU • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY



Savor the goodness of a 'boutique' fruit that looks like an apple but tastes like grape

KITCHEN RESCUE
Reggie Aspiras

Everything round is in

SOMETHING ROUND THAT have to be present on New Year's Day, are, apples. But this time, you're getting two fruits in one—Half apple + half grape is equal to this "boutique" fruit called grapple.

So what are they and how are they made? According to the website grapple-fruits.com, "the apples begin as Washington Extra Fancy Fuji Apples. Of all apples this is the one that takes on the grape flavor best."

"This Patent Pending process is complex and the ingredient mix primarily includes concentrated grape flavor and pure water. All ingredients are USDA and FDA approved and the process has been licensed by the Washington State Department of Agriculture."

"There is nothing but flavor being infused into the Fuji apple. The apple takes on no additional sugars or calories. They are not genetically altered in any way. The apple is as healthy as ever but now has the new exciting grape flavor."

What caught my attention when I was gifted a box of these little wonders was the smell. It smells so sweet, with hints of grape and a tinge of apple. I was so bewildered when I saw what was written on the box: "Looks like an apple but tastes like grape! Say Grape-Li!"

So intrigued, I immediately bit into one. Nice and crunchy, sweet, in fact, very sweet. The grape taste is there, like faint grape extract. I wondered, though, hadn't I known, would I have detected it?

So, I asked my friend Neha to try it without telling her what it was. The minute she bit into it, she said: "This so good! Hmmm! So, so good! What is this apple?" Then I asked, why, what does it taste like? "It just tastes different. It's good!"

When I finally told her what it was, she was so amazed! "Oo nga, tama! Grape and apple nga siya!" Ewan lang, don't know if she was just trying to be "ini" Hahaha!

My next lab rat was my brother, Manong Boy. To him I did the same. I had him bite into it without telling him what it was.

After doing so, he stared at me and quipped: "Oi! Ano ngayon?" I swear, men! After telling him that it was a grapple he goes, "Oo nga, it's Welch's Grape Juice! Ayaw ko na, marigas!" Again.... I swear, men!

Regardless of how you feel about this mutated fruit, I was so excited about it that I used it immediately, the same afternoon when I taped my New Year episode for "Venus Cooks for Mars" (Makusig Network Channel 76).

I pan roasted them for my salad to make the perfect accompaniment to my US Bone in Prime Rib. And this time, it was perfect!

I cannot tell you how beautifully it caramelizes. And the aroma, fabulous—you could taste the fruit from the smell, a perfect mix of apple and grape! You must try roasting them yourselves if only for the experience of it.

Surely, the arrival of the first shipment of grapple is a prelude to the exciting things the coming year brings; where something old—in this case the apple and grape—is transformed, into something new.

EVERYTHING/C2

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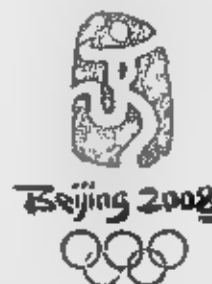
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Promotion runs from November 15, 2007 to January 15, 2008. Terms and conditions apply. Per DTI-MCR Permit No. 5708, Series of 2007. See flyers for more information.



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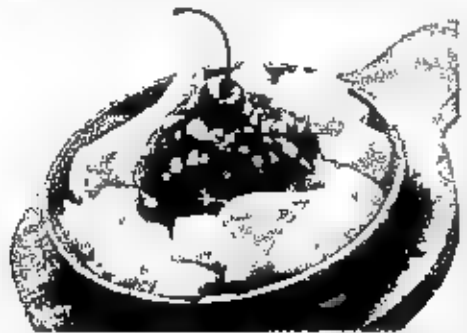


TASTY AND FILLING BURGER

If you crave for some homemade burgers, then you are in for a treat at Gwello's. Enjoy Tommy's burger, a mouth-watering burger made of 200 g juicy burger patty mixed with that char-broiled taste. It's cooked to perfection with only the freshest and finest ingredients. Tommy's burger is served with cheese toppings, chili beans with sauce and fries on the side, making it a superb treat for kids and adults alike. Gwello's Eastwood City branch is located at Fuente.

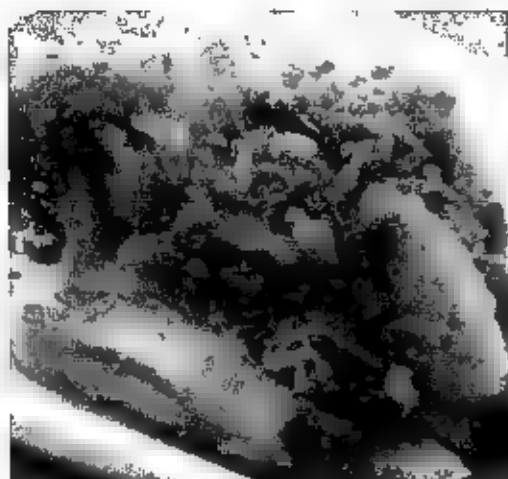
New Year's buffet

BELLEVUE'S MAIN DINING OUTLET, CAFÉ D'ASIE, WELCOMES the start of a new year with a bountiful feast of Grilled Fish Fillet with Moose Line Sauce, Mousse Matsote, Pollo Ala Diavola and Prawn Salsa Verde, among others, on Dec. 31, which also includes a round of sparkling wine. Call 7716181

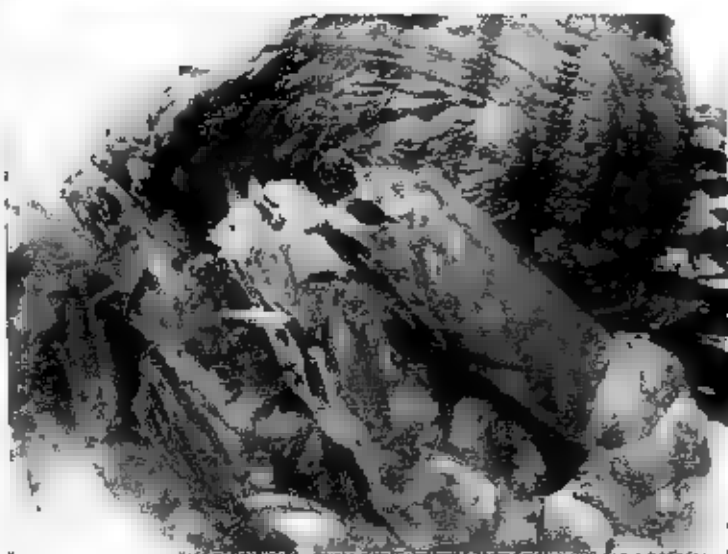


SUPER BOWL OF CHINA is launching this holiday season four new ice cream desserts. Now available in all 14 branches, the new desserts are Double Happiness Ice Cream Cake with layers of rich chocolate and

creamy vanilla ice cream blended with Snickers candy bits on crushed Oreos cookie crust and topped with hot fudge sauce; Brownie Ice Cream Sundae, moist and chewy chocolate brownie made a la mode with creamy vanilla ice cream, hot fudge sauce, and peanut bits topped with Maraschino cherry; Choco Cream Cake a la Mode, rich chocolate cake with a chocolate cream center and topped with velvety smooth vanilla ice cream, hot fudge sauce and a cherry; and Fruit Medley Sundae that combines banana slices and ripe mango chunks served with vanilla ice cream and topped with hot fudge sauce, peanut bits and whipped cream. Available are regular favorites like Lemon Chicken, Sweet and Sour Pork, Honey-glazed Pork Ribs, Fish Fillet with Taro Sauce, Sliced Beef with Broccoli, Super Bowl Birthday Noodles, Yang Chow Fried Rice, Sauteed Fresh Szechuan Scallops and Hunan Tofu.

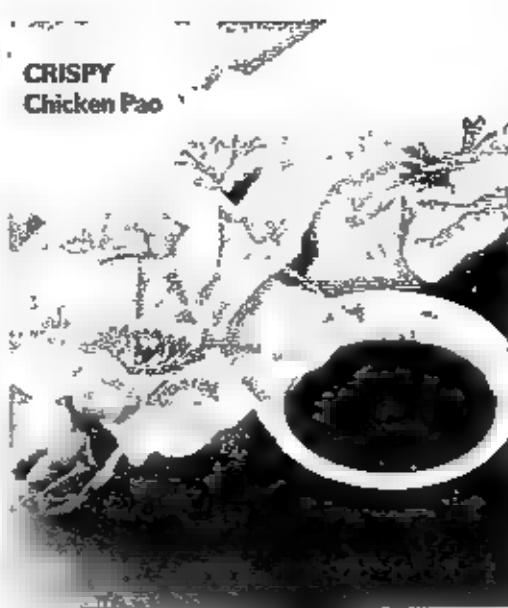


FISH Out of Water (Red Crab's new venture into more sophisticated seafood dining) offers international seafood specials. The restaurant is at 3/L, Greenbelt 5, Makati City (7293858).



CRUSTASIA Asian Crab and Seafood House features new menu categories: Crustasia Enchanting, Crustasia Fulfilling, Crustasia Liberating and Transformative Crustasia. New Thai curry dishes like Thai Red Curry with Beef Tenderloin, Thai Yellow Curry with Chicken and Chorizo served with whole wheat soba noodles or whole wheat naan are available. Other favorites include King Fish in Lychee Sauce, Panggang Stingray, Vietnamese Fish in Claypot, Butter Oatmeal Prawns and Sambal Prawns. Crustasia branches are at Power Plant Mall, Rockwell Center (7285463); The Podium (6313857); TriNoma (9013607); Crustasia's Thai Shrimp House in Shangri-La Plaza Mall (9104096); and Corte de las Palmas, Alabang Town Center (7222968).

An eat-all-you-can holiday promo



CRISPY Chicken Pao

THE GOOD EARTH TEA ROOM RECENTLY launched an eat-all-you-can lunch promo, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., for only P299 per person plus service charge.

This special Asian menu includes best-sellers such as lily on the pond, lemon chicken, spicy Nanking beef, and fish bamboo. For children 6 years old and below, this treat will be offered for free. Takeout of leftovers and sharing of food between eat-all-you-can and a la carte diners are not allowed. Also, diners with leftovers will be charged twice the normal price of the promo.

Promo is ongoing until Jan. 15 in all Good Earth branches at Greenbelt 3, Makati City; Metrowalk, Ortigas, Pasig City; Alabang Town Center, Muntinlupa City; and TriNoma, Quezon City. The TriNoma branch offers a 10-percent discount until the end of January.

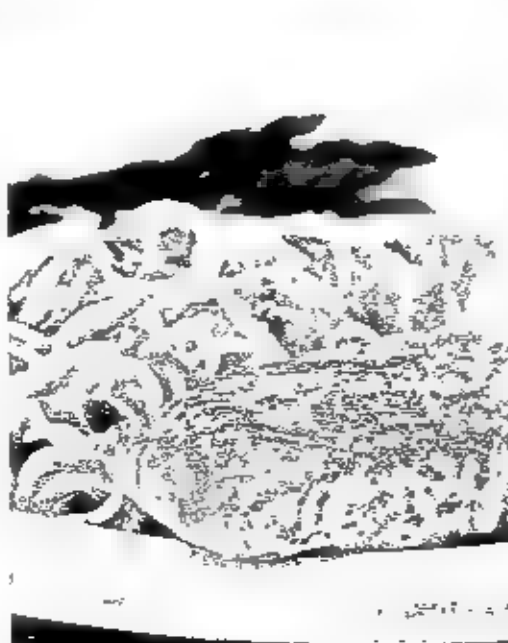


SPARERIBS in Mandarin Orange Sauce

til the end of January.

For delivery, call the Greenbelt branch at 7574561-62; Metrowalk, 6872881; Alabang Town Center, 8093260, and TriNoma, 9019629.

Chain's 'best-looking' branch opens



PAN-SAUTEED Salmon

CALIFORNIA PIZZA KITCHEN INC. (CPK) has opened its newest branch in Power Plant Mall, 2/F Archaeology.

The new branch is inspired by the design of CPK in Monterey, California. It features natural stone walls and travertine-tiled floors designed by Vicente R. Benito Architectural Services.

The menu will include all popular favorites, including Thai Chicken Pizza, Jamaican Jerk Pizza, BBQ Chicken Chopped Salad, Shanghai Garlic Noodles, and new items like Blue Crab Cakes, Pan Sauteed Salmon, Mediterranean Salad, Miso Salad, Cabo Crab Cakes, Cajun Pizza and Italian Tomato and Basil Pizza.

A full bar offers an extensive beverage menu, including 40 specialty drinks.

California Pizza Kitchen Inc., founded in 1985 in Beverly Hills, California, is a leading casual-dining chain.

CPK Rockwell, designed to be the chain's best looking restaurant, is open Monday-



PIZZA Cajun

Thursday, 11 a.m.-9 p.m.; Friday, 11 a.m.-10 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-10 p.m.; and Sunday, 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Call 8954404

Pleasure bar tour series



SAN MIGUEL'S CERVEZA Negra recently launched its Distinct Pleasure Bar Tour Series at watering holes in Metro Manila. The event fused fashion, arts, gadgets and music. Of late, Cerveza Negra toasted its Achiever's Circle, an exclusive club of young executives, entrepreneurs, artists and "influencers" in their respective fields, at the Astuca Bar in San Juan.

Belonging to this elite circle were JP de la Vega, co-founder and chief executive officer of Yeaps Corp.; Dr. Timothy John Divinagracia, president of Telega Inc., a franchisee of The Optical Shop; Joseph Frago, president of Mad Banana, a motion and design company; Eric

Cham, PR and independent entrepreneur; Meg Sonaga, representative of Aqua Fortis Dragonboat Team; Mark Buham, general manager of Rex General Merchandising International Corp.; and Alvin Saraman, product manager of Seattle's Best Coffee.

Also feted were Cesar Monastrial, general manager of Island Air Product Corp.; Kim David, general manager of Stage Magic, affiliate of CTV Events; Alexandra Faustmann, marketing manager of Michellis; Raimier Pengson, chief executive officer and director of 422 Animation Studio; and Kent Angel Estrada, one of the top street magicians in Manila.



ACHIEVERS' Circle

Two new flavors

THE MAKERS OF BAILEYS Irish Cream, the world's original cream liqueur, introduced recently two new flavors—Baileys with a hint of Mint Chocolate and Baileys with a hint of Crème Caramel.

Baileys Irish Cream is a unique blend of quality ingredients—fresh Irish dairy cream, finest spirits, triple-distilled Irish whiskey and chocolate flavors.

The products will be available in 700-ml bottles retailing for P650-P720.

Baileys, launched in Ireland in 1974, is currently ranked seventh among the world's top-selling premium spirit brands and the No. 1-selling liqueur in the world. Baileys is owned by Diageo plc, the world's leading premium drinks business.

Its other brands are Johnnie Walker, Guinness, Smirnoff, J&B, Gilbey's, Tanqueray, Captain Morgan, Barton & Guestier, Beaulieu Vineyard and Sterling Vineyards.

Everything round is in

From page C1

I wish you Heaven's best in 2008. May it be abundantly filled, in all the right places, with love of family, the comfort and care of friends, the wealth of health, with heaps of good fortune and cheer!

And please allow me again to thank you for reading me and Kitchen Rescue!

Happy New Year!

Grapples & Seckel is available at Dizon Farms in Market! Market! Call 8867779.

Salad of Pan Roasted Grapples with Blue Cheese Slivers, Walnuts & Shiitake Mushrooms

Pan-roasted grapples: 4 grapples, peeled, cored and wedged (Seckel pears also work well for this salad. The first shipment just came in. Apples are alright, too.)

2 tbsp butter

2 tbsp sugar

On a pan, melt butter. Add sugar. Put in grapples and cook until nice and golden. Mix every so often to make sure they color evenly. Set aside.

Mushrooms:

2 c shiitake mushrooms

3 tbsp olive oil

Salt and pepper

Saute mushrooms in olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

Dressing:

2 tbsp white wine vinegar

2 tbsp balsamic vinegar

2 tbsp minced shallots

1½ tbsp sugar

1½ tsp chopped fresh rosemary or thyme

2 tsp Dijon mustard

1 tsp salt or to taste

½ tsp freshly ground black pepper or to taste

1½ tsp green onions

½ c olive oil

In a bowl, combine all the ingredients except olive oil. Mix well. Add in olive oil in a fine stream while whisking. Season to taste.

Other salad components:

Mixed greens

Walnuts, toasted and chopped

Blue cheese (I love Bleu d'Auvergne from Santos)

To assemble salad:

Lay greens on a salad server. Add mushrooms, on top of greens. Lay pan roasted grapples over mushrooms, spreading them out evenly. Top with slices of blue cheese. Finish off with chopped walnuts. Serve with dressing.

E-mail the author at rasprats@inquirer.com.ph

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GRAND CAROUSEL

FIREWORKS

THE BLOOMFIELDS

KitchenRescue2



excerpts from the Philippine Daily Inquirer
The Unedited Version

REGGIE ASPIRAS

A second helping of a Lifestyle column

"KITCHEN RESCUE 2. THE Unedited Version" is the sequel to the best-selling book "Kitchen Rescue Vol. 1. Excerpts from the Philippine Daily Inquirer and 'Then Some'" that was released in 2005.

Written by one of the country's top chefs, Reggie M. Aspiras, this book follows the tradition of the first volume by continuing the compilation of all the articles written by Aspiras in her weekly column.

Starting off where the first book ended, KR2 is sure to provide its readers with a wide variety of marvelous recipes, ideas, tips and answers to all our culinary woes

and kitchen quandaries.

Hailed as the Culinary Google, book two is presented in the same light hearted and amusing method that has endeared the author to an audience that has continued to grow since the first Kitchen Rescue column came out in 2003.

"KR2" is definitely a must-read for all first-time cooks, confused aficionados and especially those with an immense love for food.

"Kitchen Rescue 2" is available at all leading bookstores and newsstands in Metro Manila. Call 6474744, 6475631; or e-mail ehhd@pltdsl.net.

One of the year's best

AMY BESA, WHO CO-wrote the beautiful book "Memories of Philippine Kitchens: Stories and Recipes from Far and Near" with her husband Romy Dorotan, shares some good news from wintry New York where the couple owns and runs a restaurant called Cendrillon.



PHILIPPINE kakanin

When the couple attended the Oxford symposium on food in the United Kingdom in September, they happened to meet Bee Wilson, who writes book reviews and a food column for the Sunday Times of London and the Sunday Telegraph.

To their surprise, when Wilson came up with her list of the best food books of 2007 in Nov. 25 Sunday Times, "Memories" was included.

Wilson has also informed Besa that she was again going to write about the book on Filipino cuisine in her Dec. 23 column for the Sunday Telegraph.

According to Besa, Dorotan had cooked for Wilson and other participants in the symposium at the Oxford home of Gina Lim, sister of Pia Lim-Castillo.

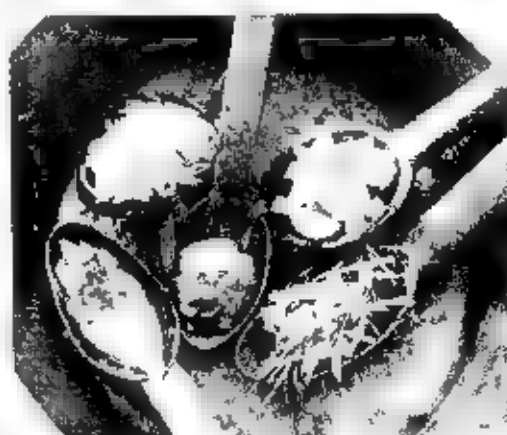
Here's what Wilson had to say about the Besa-Dorotan food book.

"In this globalized age, how many truly unknown cuisines remain? In Britain, we still know next to nothing about Filipino food. This beautiful and informative book is a compelling argument for why this should change. Besa and Dorotan run Cendrillon, a popular Filipino restaurant in Manhattan. They have distilled their happiest food memories into this book, drawing out the many connections in the kitchens of the



ories of Philippine Kitchens
STORIES AND RECIPES FROM FAR AND NEAR

AMY BESA AND ROMY DOROTAN



CONDIMENTS, Pinoy style

Philippines—with Spain (paella made with coconut milk), with Mexico (empanadas) and with America (banana chifon pie). Most remarkable of all, though, are the indigenous dishes such as lumpia—delicate purple spring rolls filled with vegetables; and chicken adobo, a casserole simmered with vinegar, garlic and chili. As well as being an outstanding recipe book, this is also a gorgeous travelogue, which makes you yearn to visit the Philippines."

"Memories" made the list along with, among others, "Persia in Peckham: Recipes from Persepolis" by Sally Butcher; "Week in Week Out: 52 Seasonal Stories" by Simon Hopkinson; "Cook Simple: Effortless Cooking Every Day" by Diana Henry; "The River Cottage Fish Book" by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Nick Fisher; and "Citrus: A History" by Pierre Laszlo.

The 232-page "Memories of Philippine Kitchens," with photographs by Neal Oshima, foreword by Peter Kaminsky and introduction by Raymond Sokolov, is published by Stewart, Tabori & Chang and is available at PowerBooks and National Book Store.

Here's the link to Wilson's online list: http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/books/non-fiction/article2913012.ece?token=null&offset=12



EMPANADA merited a special mention in Sue Wilson's "best of" list for the Sunday Times of London.

PHOTO BY NEAL OSHIMA FROM "MEMORIES OF PHILIPPINE KITCHENS"

Special blend of coffee

AS FIGARO NOW SOURCES its coffee beans directly from farmers around the country it has also concocted a special blend of organically grown coffee beans sourced from as far as Benguet, Kalinga and Ifugao to as far south as Bukidnon.

Apdy tagged "Figaro House Reserve," it compares to how wine connoisseurs almost keep their best grapes only for "house use," never to be shared commercially.

"Figaro House Reserve" will be the new Figaro blend that will be featured in its house

brew, brew of the day or house special.

You need not ask what is the specialty of the house as brewed coffee lovers will definitely enjoy cup after cup of this new blend. After all, what becomes brewed coffee is tasted and "cupped" by the Figaro owners themselves.

It is almost very predictable for Reena Francisco or Chit Juan, COO and CEO, respectively, to order and continuously enjoy the brewed coffee in their stores and all day in their offices.

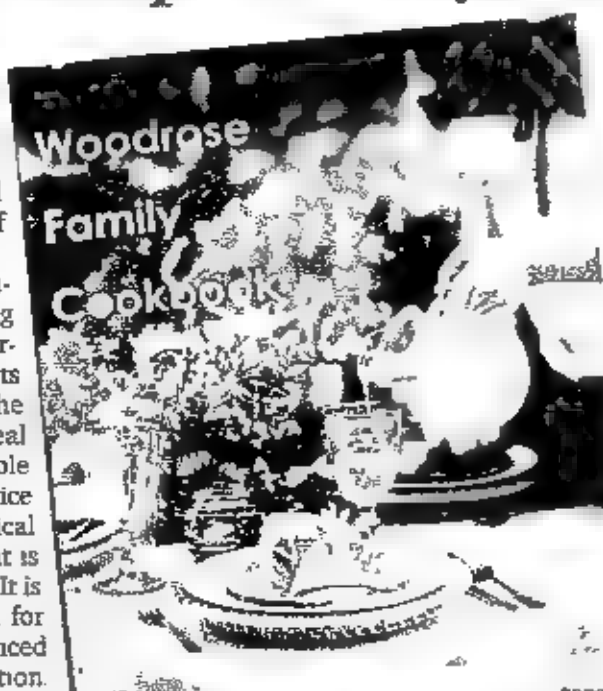
Cookbook keeps family tradition alive

RECENT STUDIES IN THE United States have begun to sing praises for families who continue to maintain the tradition of the family dinner-together partaking of a simple meal and sharing stories at the end of the day.

Carolyn Moynihan in her article "The Incredible Reappearing Family Dinner" (www.mercatornet.com, Sept. 16, 2005), reports that scientists have come to the conclusion that "a family meal gives children regular, dependable access to their parents and vice versa, giving everyone a practical way to keep in touch with what is happening in each other's lives. It is also an excellent teaching tool for basic life skills: etiquette, balanced nutrition, the art of conversation. What's more it has served as the best possible opportunity to pass on and reinforce shared values."

The modern Filipino family is likewise beset by economic realities—a busy two-income household and children growing up in an increasingly individualistic world.

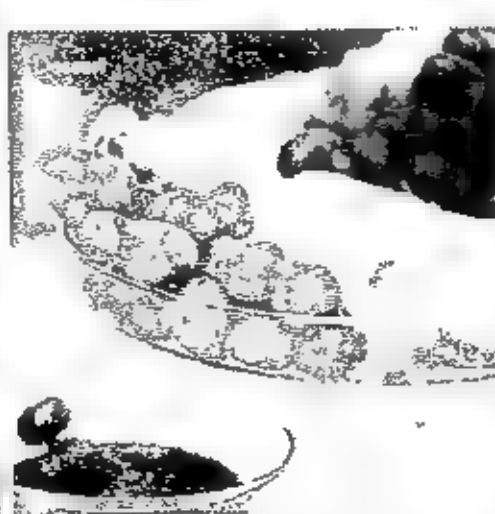
To answer the need to create more opportunities for family members to



bond, Paref Woodrose School has come out with the "Woodrose Family Cookbook."

It is a treasury of family recipes, cooking tips and parenting suggestions culled from Woodrose students, parents, grandparents, alumnae, faculty, staff and friends.

One recipe, Milenyo Pasta, comes



with a story about how the Espina family got through Super typhoon "Milenyo" with leftovers from a defrosted refrigerator and a badly battered basil plant.

Other recipes talk about traditional family favorites passed on from one generation to another. Parenting tips such as how to jumpstart a conversation are useful especially when dealing with children used to being wired via cell phone or iPod to another space and time, other than at the dinner table with you, that is.

The elegant cover and luscious pho-

tos of dishes were done by Aldwin Aspillera with photo contributions from Woodrose students and parents—Stephanie Cabañes, Deric Gamboa, Tino Ley, Tony and Marilyn Liles.

Art direction and food styling was by Frieda Lim with graphics layout by Pat Collantes. Culinary consultant for the project was Marina Reyes.

To launch the 30th anniversary celebration of the school, the cookbook was recently unveiled at Woodrose school on Acacia Avenue Extension, Ayala Alabang.

Those who attended the event were Paref board member José Guerra; Woodrose school president and chair Louette Tolosa; executive director Delia Udani, and representing the parents were Maricar Reyes, Jenny de los Reyes-Lizares, Meg Francisco, Menchie Gamboa, LadyBird Pineda and Gina Garcia.

The cookbook sells for P450 with a special baker's dozen promotion: Buy 12, get 1 free. Call 0920-9102972 or 8506380.



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CUTE touches, such as candy canes and sugar trees, make the cupcakes easy on the eyes.



OATMEAL raisin cookies, chocolate cookies and walnut brownies



CHRISTMAS cupcakes



CUPCAKES for children

Pretty, luscious cupcakes

Text by Bianca Consunji
Photos by Ryan Fernandez

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THE month of December that makes sweets and pastries even yummiest than they are on other months. For some reason, biting into an oatmeal cookie while sipping a mug of hot chocolate seems infinitely sweeter while sitting in front of the Christmas tree.

However, nothing can ruin the pleasure of eating Christmas goodies quite like a dry brownie or a flat-tasting cookie. So when choosing goodies to give away for the holidays, make sure that you're picking something of quality—not just random store-bought pastries.

While brownies and cookies (and the occasional unfortunate fruitcake) remain the top giveaways, cupcakes are quickly becoming popular edible gifts this season. The cupcake craze, which hit Manila nearly two years ago, has spawned dozens of businesses that offer cupcakes in all sizes and flavors. However, of all the cupcake bakers in the country, two stand out: Sonja Ocampo of Sonja's Cupcakes, and Yumi Castrillo of Yummy Piece of Cake.

Ocampo is often credited as the one responsible for the cupcake craze; her store, Sonja's Cupcakes (located in Serendra) is often filled with customers who buy them by the dozen. The cupcakes are light, sweet and easy on the eyes, which explains why Ocam-

The cupcake craze has spawned dozens of businesses that offer treats in all sizes and flavors

po's offerings are popular among the young set.

po's offerings are popular among the young set.

For the holidays, Sonja's Cupcakes is offering decorated cupcakes. Regular flavors (popular ones include chocolate, red velvet cake, lemon, vanilla and strawberry) are topped with brightly colored icing, candy canes, sugar stars, and sprinkles. Kids will love the Frosty the Snowman decorations, while more subdued—but no less playful—adults might want to take home cupcakes topped with snowflakes, wreaths and

Sonja's Cupcakes also offers more "serious" treats for those who want their desserts decidedly less frothy. Standouts include the brownies (thick wedges of creamy chocolate with walnuts folded into them), chocolate cookies, and oatmeal raisin cookies.

Cupcake tower

If you're having a Christmas party, a good way to impress your guests is to set up a cupcake tower. Yumi Castrillo, who first became popular because of her unusual cupcake flavors, is one of the country's most in-demand bakers because of her cupcake towers.

The towers can be done according to theme. "Children like bright colors, while the most popular tower for weddings has plenty of flowers," Castrillo said. "I can personalize them according to what the client wants."

Castrillo's cupcakes go from P20-P35, less expensive than those usually found in the market. Cupcake tower setups start at P3,000, a small price to pay for their wow factor. Bestsellers include blue cheese and pear, strawberries and champagne, banana and chocolate and blueberry and white chocolate. She also added new flavors to her

list: Bollywood Bombshell, a chai latte-flavored cupcake topped with white chocolate buttercream; Shake Your Bonbon, a dark chocolate cupcake with hazelnut praline buttercream; and Hawaii Five-O, a coconut cupcake with white chocolate buttercream and coconut flakes.

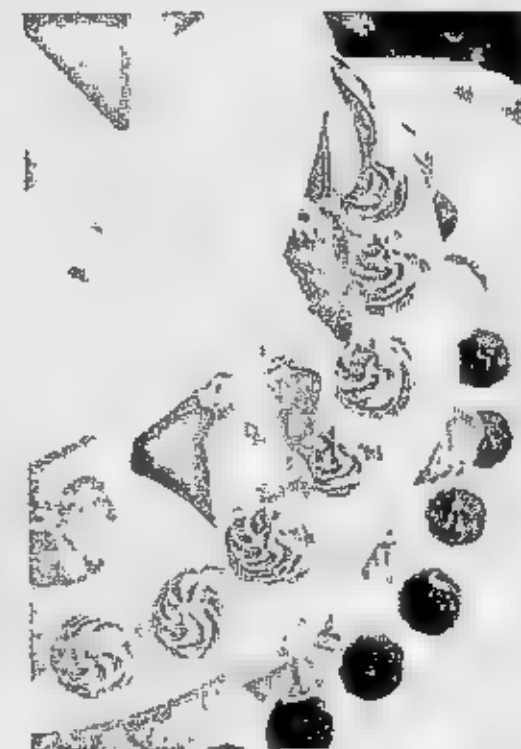
Recently, she started offering mini cupcakes, which cost P15 each. Available in dark chocolate and vanilla (Castrillo's special flavors are available only in regular sizes), they can be topped with different flavors of buttercream: vanilla, dark chocolate, java chip, orange mocha, Nutella, Bailey's, caramel, strawberry, chocolate Valencia, white chocolate, peanut butter, and lemon.

The holidays are the best excuse to indulge in all sorts of sweet treats—now's the time to try some of the best.

Contact Yumi Castrillo at yummypieceofcake@gmail.com or visit www.flickr.com/photos/yummypieceofcake. Visit Sonja's Cupcakes at Serendra, Global City.

E-mail the author at biancaconsunji@yahoo.com

PERFECT for the holidays

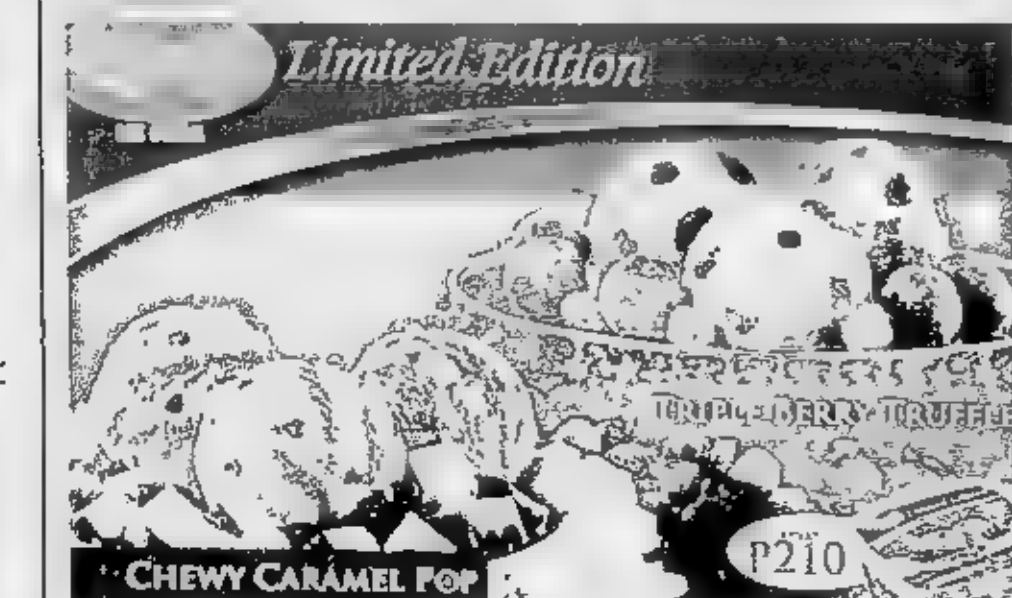


YUMI Castrillo of Yummy Piece of Cake can personalize cupcake towers.



AN ASSORTMENT of cupcakes topped with Bailey's, chocolate, and java chip buttercream

MINI cupcakes by Sonja are ideal for parties.



Limited Edition

CHEWY CARAMEL POP

P210

New ice cream flavor

MAGNOLIA ICE CREAM HAS added Quezo Primero to its roster of everyday treats.

It combines the flavors of Magnolia Ice Cream and Magnolia Cheese.

Magnolia Gold Label Quezo Primero is available in 3L Party Tub, 1.5L Family Tub, 700ml Picnic Tub, and pint.

To help shoppers, Magnolia Ice Cream tubs are now color-coded for easy identification of different variants: royal blue for classic flavors, gold for Gold Label, and beige for Limited Edition items.

Microwaveable and scratch-proof, the tub can be used as food container.

Magnolia Ice Cream is available at supermarkets, grocery stores, Monterey Meatshop and San Miguel Food Shop.



QUEZO PRIMERO

A diario novela by CARLO J. CAPARAS
To have to hold
Art: ARNEL A. AVETRIA

LANG MINUTO MATAPOS MAINOM ANG WINE...
I'M DIZZY... MASAKIT ANG LUGA KO...
MATULOG KA, ARVIN...
BUMASAK SA UPU-AN SI ARVIN...
LUNGG...
BOSS... HE'S DONE!
NO. 99
MATEO... ARVIN IS FINISHED!
UWIAN NA... NANG HINDI DUMARATING SA LOBBY SI ARVIN, PUNAHAN NIYEN NYITO SA OP. SINA.
BAKA HIMATAYIN HA HA HAA?
GOD...
TO BE CONTINUED

A LUPIN BY JESS ABRERA
MAY REGALO KA BA SA AKIN?
OO
YUNG PAG LAYA MO!
ANO?
REGALO BA YUN?
POGI POINTS MO YUN, E!
DYAH!

PUGAD BABOY BY RM, JUNIOR
PAMASNO NINO NA LANG TO PARA SA AKIN TO...
PAG PUNATAMA NINO AKO DITO AY ILALAYAN KO ANG BUONG BUWAY KO SA PAGSISILBI SA INYO MAHAL KONG PANGINODON!
DIST-NUVE!
PARA-RENOVATE HO ANG SIMBAHAN DITO... MAGDOO-DONATE AKO...
AYAN! TATLONG NUMERO NA LANG! TRES! TRENTAY UNO! KWARENTA!!
TRENTAY TRES!
PATI AKO PINAG-BIBOLILA MO... BIBILI KA LANG NG Ferrari, luku-luku!
SASAKYAN HO PAGO KAGOD-RENOVATE AKO SA OPPORUNANITE DI BA?
BEINTE!

GARFIELD BY JM DAVIS
LIZ AND I ARE GOING OUT FOR NEW YEARS, SO I GOT YOU ANOTHER PET BITTER
SHE'S NOT TO BE HARMED
SUCH A NAIVE LITTLE MAN

MARY MURPHY BY JERRY SCOTT
WHAT'S TAKING SO LONG?
I CAN'T DECIDE WHICH SWEATSHIRT TO WEAR
YOU MEAN YOU'RE ACTUALLY STARTING TO CARE ABOUT YOUR APPEARANCE?
WHAT?? NO!
I'M TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHICH ONE WILL GET ME IN THE LEAST TROUBLE WHEN I LOSE IT.

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO
You're Not Going to open this Present just because it's technically not Christmas anymore?
MEAN I LIVE BY MY PRINCIPLES. I WILL WAIT 'TIL NEXT CHRISTMAS TO OPEN IT
But what if it's Food? You're just going to waste it?
Don't worry. It's not. I took a peek.

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO
AND NG KLAS KAYONG NINING? PINAGTAGUAN NINYU AKO NUNON TUVING PASKO!
HINDI AKO NAGTAGO!
AND NG HINDE? HULING-RUM KO KAYONG NAGTAGO SA LIKOD NG ISANG...
BAYONG!! TULAD NITO!!
SSSHHH!! (MAHAK!!) WAG KANG MANGAYAP

KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA
AYOW!! SAKTO MAKITA RIN KINAI NG REGALO KO SAYO! KALAM NA UMALA NG HANY! ETO! PARA SA YU...
ABSTRACT MATHEMATICAL PROGRESSIONAL
HINDI MO MA-GETE NG? ABSTRACT NGA E, TUNAWK! BUNAW! AT LEAST ME FROM YOUR SOMETHING TO POWDER ON FOR THE SINGLE YEARS! MAMA! ASTIG NG?
BY THE RECORD, ON ACD SA'DO ANG TENGEDAHAN NG POG-RESENYAN! BAYAN ARWAL, HANGIN NA NG POG-RESENYAN!

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON
HEY A CHRISTMAS CARD FROM YOUR BROTHER!
OH?
Dear Ben, Happy Holidays! Your brother, James, just for you...
Although family brings a great deal of contentment, wealth has been my greatest achievement!
A wife and children were not meant for me...
So I wish you the best, all the way from Tahiti...
HERE'S A PICTURE...
SHAMPOO!

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 "The Sweetheart of Sigma"
4 Sombre
9 Plant pore
14 Concealed
15 Turn counter back to zero
16 Savory jelly
17 Start of Evan Esar quip
20 Swipe
21 One of the Bobbsey Twins
22 Caesar's fateful day
23 Flutter
25 Sate-lag abbr
27 A single time
30 Part 2 of quip
35 Plant with fronds
37 South Florida city
38 Harlem room
39 Bara of the silents
41 Parking or vacant follower
42 Available buyer
44 Memorable period
45 Colt or Morse
48 Enjoy a bore
49 Part 3 of quip
51 In addition
52 Way cool
53 Wound crust
55 Case component
58 Chow down
61 Maria Cass
65 End of quip
68 Santa's little helpers
69 The Velvet Fog
70 One in Emden
71 Palms
72 Space of "Carrie"
73 Hrs. in Salt Lake
DOWN
1 Small, broken-off piece
2 Outmoded sound system
3 Pastoral poem
4 Watery porridge
5 Prepare for a new job
6 One
7 Wednesday
8 Quiescent of ore
9 Sicilian mount
10 Tended lots
11 Casual garb
12 Opinion page, briefly
13 High cards
14 Alfront
15 "Mack the"
16 Sacred songs
17 Remainder
18 Frequently
19 Indian leader
20 Yellowish white
21 Teapot part
22 Modifies
23 Hayseed
24 Conceptions
25 Henner on "Tad"
26 On the briny
27 Fit for farming
28 Actress Eve
29 Lecture halls
30 Hea hawed
31 Backstreet
32 Went fast
33 Confederate
34 Magina exposed
35 Reps.
36 Strits role on "Star Trek. TNG"
37 News piece
38 Soul singer
39 Redding
40 Canvas shelter
41 Mag. edition
42 Conjunctions

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY You're very generous, even to the point of self-sacrifice. You have wit, humor and a good nature. Your friends are loyal to you. Many of you develop specific technical skills. You have your own very high code of conduct. It's important to have faith in something you value. Work hard to build and construct something this year. Your rewards will soon follow.
Birthdate of: Emile de Ravin, actress; Masi Oka, actor; Gerard Depardieu, actor.
ARIES (March 21 to April 19): If others ask you to accept increased responsibilities today, say yes. You won't have to do anything special to impress everyone. (It's in the bag.)
TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Try to do something different. Be a tourist in your own city. You want to explore more of life, and you want adventure! You particularly want to learn something new.
GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): For the next few weeks, you'll feel unusually intense about anything that arises. Don't worry about this. This intensity can make you focus, and it also will give you strong powers of concentration.
CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You can learn a lot about yourself now by observing how you relate to those who are closest to you. How much do you listen? How much do you talk? (Watch yourself.)
LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Give yourself the tools to do a good job of getting better organized. You're in work mode. Therefore, get as much done as you can.
VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): This is a playful week for you. Enjoy the arts. See some sports. Go to a movie. Attend parties and flirt a little. (Flirting is the art of making someone else feel attractive.)
LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Home, family and domestic matters, including real estate, are your primary focus for the next few weeks. Discussions with parents and family members will be particularly significant. Do show up.
SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Your pace is busy right now! Short trips, errands and increased time spent with siblings and relatives keep you on the run. Don't sit at home.
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You're full of money-making ideas now. You might want to write them down. Talk about your plans for earning more money, or even spending it, with others.
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is a powerful time for you, because the Sun, Mercury and Jupiter are all in your sign. You have a strong desire to talk to everyone.
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Your research skills are excellent this week. Don't be afraid to poke around looking for answers. You might find them in some unlikely places.
PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Accept all invitations. Call people up. Attend parties. Join classes, clubs and organizations. This is a popular time for you!

CONCEPTS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green
Difficulty Level ★★★
HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU
Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com
Answer to previous puzzle
2 7 5 1 9 6 4 3 8
3 8 1 4 5 2 9 6 7
4 6 9 7 3 8 5 1 2
8 4 2 9 6 3 1 7 5
7 1 3 2 4 5 6 8 9
5 9 6 8 7 1 2 4 3
9 5 4 6 8 7 3 2 1
1 3 8 5 2 4 7 9 6
6 2 7 3 1 9 8 5 4

Green the New Year with Grapes

CALIFORNIA GRAPES ARE MORE THAN just sweets. They are versatile fruits that can be used and mixed into exciting dishes. They have been found to benefit brain health, prevent Alzheimer's disease, improve heart function, and protect against diabetes and cancer. Grapes provide the powerful natural antioxidants known as polyphenols, which shield the body from diseases.

Here are grape recipes that will help you enjoy a fun, healthy New Year's Eve.

Spicy Grape & Chicken Lettuce Cups

- 1 tbsp cornstarch
- 1 c low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/4 c water
- 1/4 c soy sauce
- 1/4 c red wine vinegar
- 3-5 tsp Asian chili paste with garlic
- 1/4 c peanut or vegetable oil
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 tbsp fresh ginger, minced
- 1 1/2 lb ground chicken breast
- 1 1/2 c halved green California seedless grapes
- 1/4 c green onions, thinly sliced
- 1/4 c cilantro, coarsely chopped



1 head iceberg lettuce, cut in half and separated into leaves
1 1/4 c julienne cucumber

In a small bowl, combine cornstarch and water. Add chicken broth, sugar, vinegar, chili paste and soy sauce. Set aside. Heat oil in large nonstick skillet over high heat. Add garlic and ginger; sauté for 30 seconds. Add chicken and cook until no longer pink, about 5-8 minutes. Add grapes and green onions; sauté for 30 seconds. Restir the sauce mixture and pour into skillet. Stir until thickened, about 1-2 minutes. Remove from heat. Place chicken mixture in lettuce leaves, garnish with cilantro and cucumber, then roll up. Serve immediately.

Serves 4 as an entrée or 8 as an appetizer.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 339; protein 44 g; fat 6 g; calories from fat 17 percent; carbohydrates 27 g; cholesterol 99 mg; fiber 3 g; sodium 1,341 mg.

Ham Steak with Quick Grape Pan Sauce

- 1 cooked ham steak, about 1 lb
- 1/4 c white wine (or substitute orange juice)
- 3 tbsp mango chutney (chop up any large pieces)
- 1/4 c California seedless grapes, halved
- 2 tbsp cold butter, cut into 4-6 pieces



HAM Steak with Quick Grape Pan Sauce

Slice ham to desired thickness. Brown the ham steak in a preheated skillet over medium high heat, about 2-3 minutes per side. Remove the ham to warmed individual plates. Remove the skillet from the heat and pour in the white wine, being careful to protect your hands and face from the steam. Stir in the mango chutney and grapes and return to the stovetop. Simmer, stirring constantly until the chutney is melted and the grapes are just warmed through, about 1 minute. Drop the pieces of cold butter into the pan and stir until just melted. Pour the pan sauce over the ham steak and serve immediately.

Serves 4 generously.
Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 250; protein 23 g; carbohydrate 11 g; fat 11 g; saturated fat 5 g; 39 percent calories

from fat; cholesterol 66 mg; sodium 1,444 mg; fiber .6 g.

White Grape Crush

- (Serves 1)
 - 5 fresh California green grapes
 - 30 ml (1 fl oz) clear Vodka
 - 30 ml (1 fl oz) Tanqueray Gin
 - 25 ml (1/4 fl oz) Grand Marnier
 - 45 ml (1 1/2 fl oz) white grape juice
- Crush the grapes in a mixing glass. Add ice. Add all remaining ingredients, shake and strain into chilled cocktail glass. Squeeze a lime wedge into drink for acidity and garnish.

Editor's note: To have this recipe emailed to you, please send a request to info@freshcaliforniagrapes.com.

SPICY Grape & Chicken Lettuce Cups

Passion: gourmet sausages

HUNGARIAN, GERMAN franks, chorizo, bratwurst, frankfurters, chipolata, kielbasa, schueblig or cervelat. Which gourmet sausage suits your fancy?

The scent of a well-stocked meat shop is always a feast for the senses. Sausage varieties served fresh and smoked, stuffed with pork, beef, liver, veal, and poultry and seasoned with herbs, garlic, pepper and spices, all these truly spell a gastronomic heaven.

"Until about 10 years ago, these luscious delicacies were considered a rare find. But all of that changed when a company called FilFresh Inc. began delivering world-class sausage brands into our supermarkets, restaurants and hotels. Since then, Italian bratwurst, smoked chorizos, Polish Kielbasa, German franks and Hungarian sausages have become staple food in the Filipino household."

"FilFresh has made a commitment a decade ago to provide excellent quality sausages, specialty meat products and fresh frozen seafoods for every Filipino to enjoy. We distinguish FilFresh as the company that makes sausages with passion and pride," FilFresh Inc. CEO



SEAFOOD Bouillabaisse

Keith Basso said.

Established in 1997, FilFresh started out as a seafood processing and exporting company. Inspired by the demand for sausages of all kinds, the company added some of the world-renowned sausages into its product line.

"During the 1980s, we were formerly known as Seabee Seafood Corp. and quickly became the largest local exporter of fresh sashimi yellow fin and big eye tuna to Japan and the United States. In 1997, we changed to FilFresh in order to broaden our market base and establish new and more vital alliances for processed meat," FilFresh Inc. COO and general manager Ramon Crame said.

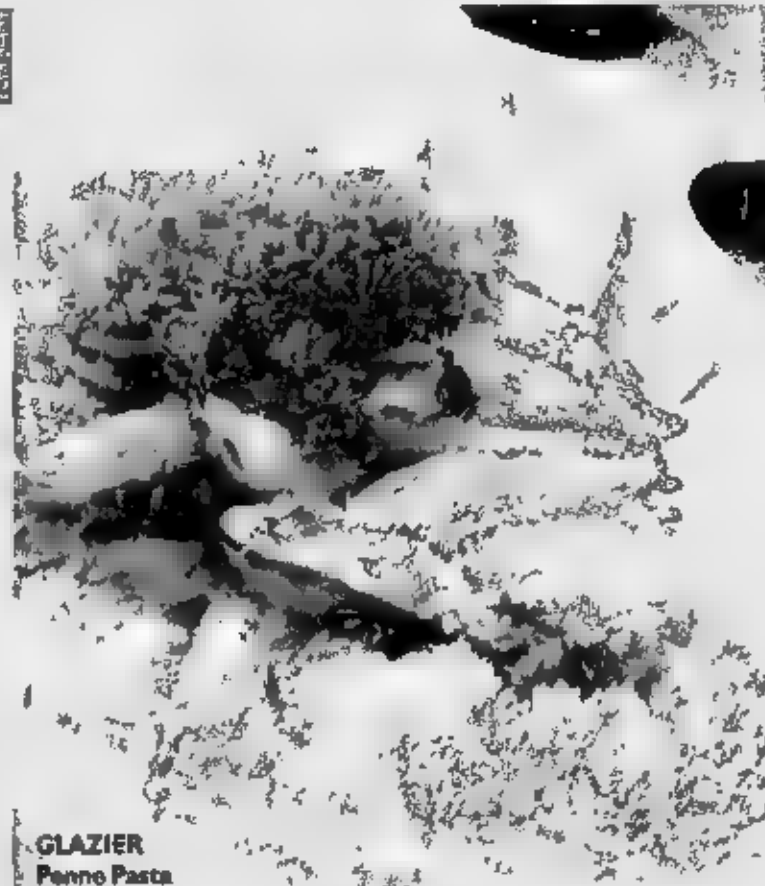
As the company continues to make significant strides in the sausage-making and seafood-processing industry, FilFresh is set to introduce another delectable treat in the form of Glazier's Frankfurters.

Glazier Penne Pasta

- Makes 6 dishes.
 - 1 lb dry penne pasta
 - 1 k tomatoes
 - 1 onion (cut into four)
 - 1 head garlic (rough chop)
 - 1 bunch garlic (fresh)
 - 5 glazier hotdogs
 - Salt and pepper to taste
 - Garnish: Basil sprig
 - Grated parmesan cheese
- Coat tomatoes, onions and garlic in olive oil. Dust with salt and pepper and lightly place in an oven and bake in high heat for 5-8 minutes or until charred. Remove from oven and set aside.

In a chopper place all ingredients and pulse seven times. The juice of the tomatoes should be out but you will still have chunks of everything still evident. Set aside and boil pasta, it should take about 15-17 minutes to cook to al dente.

While that is cooking, sauté hotdogs in olive oil for three



GLAZIER Penne Pasta

minutes or until the aroma of the hotdogs should fill the kitchen. Cover sautéed hotdogs with tomato mixture and simmer on low heat until the pasta is ready. This should take about five to seven minutes.

Once the pasta is ready, toss into sauce and sprinkle with fresh basil. Serve pasta in center and sprig of basil atop. Sprinkle

generously with parmesan cheese.

(Recipe courtesy of My Spoon's chef Bruce Lim)

FilFresh Seafood

- 400 g seabass or mahi-mahi (cut into 1-inch cubes)
- 400 g salmon (cut into 1-

- inch cubes)
- 250 g scallops
- 3 pc bay leaves
- 250 g mussels
- 1 tsp whole black pepper-corns
- 250 g clams
- 2 pc tomatoes
- 250 g shrimp (peeled and shells saved)
- 1 l water
- 3 pc slipper lobster (cut into half)
- Garnish: Parsley sprig
- 1 pc large onion (rough cut)
- Truffle oil
- 1 pc carrot (peeled and rough cut)
- Garlic bread
- 2 pc celery stalks (rough cut)
- Parmesan cheese (optional)
- Wash all seafood under cold running water.

In a large pot, add all vegetables and shrimp shells, bay leaves and peppercorns. Simmer for an hour then strain so all that remains is a flavorful stock.

In this order add fish, simmer for 2 minutes then add mussels and clams. Simmer for 4 minutes then add scallops, shrimp and lobster meat and simmer for 5 more minutes.

Remove from heat and serve, pile seafood in center of bowl, cover with stock and garnish with drizzle of truffle oil, parsley sprig and garlic bread. Parmesan cheese is optional.

Keeping the Kitchen Warm in the Winter

HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR passion for work burning? Chef Ana Park says that once you find something you are good at, you should pursue it and then it no longer becomes work.

Park partnered with a friend, with whom she attended school in Switzerland, to start a recreational cooking class. For four years, the classmates, along with a third partner, taught from a sleek kitchen classroom at Vivere Suites in Alibang where they were discovered by "legitimate food businesses." Companies would ask them to develop recipes and do food styling, and the team was successful doing both culinary classes and corporate projects.

But Park continues to hold

cooking classes in her house and in other places like a center in Las Piñas run by the Opus Dei. The center offers classes for household help or those who need to have a source of living through cooking.

Park shares one of her recipes below, as well as her practical culinary partner: Glad Cook 'n' Bake.

Made of high-quality baking and cooking paper with non-stick coating, Glad Cook 'n' Bake can be used in all methods of cooking. What makes it even better is it does not leave a 'waxy' aftertaste. It also gives your family a break from fats and oils, which means healthier and convenient cooking. Glad Cook 'n' Bake can withstand temperatures in both microwave and

convection ovens.

With her passion for cooking far from waning, Park is just as glad to have Glad Cook 'n' Bake within reach. Get more recipe ideas from Park of Cooking Basics in every box of Glad Cook 'n' Bake, available in any supermarket nearest you.

Tropical Chicken Packages

- 2 chicken breasts, cut into strips
- 1 red or green pepper, cut into small squares
- 1/2 can pineapple tidbits, drained
- 1/4 c desiccated coconut, unsweetened
- 2 tbsp fresh cilantro (waxy) leaves
- Marinade

TROPICAL Chicken Packages



- 1 c coconut cream (kakang gata)
- 2 tbsp fish sauce (patis)
- 1 green chili
- 1 tsp chopped garlic
- 1 1-inch segment ginger, chopped
- 1 tsp thick dark soy sauce
- 1/2 c fresh cilantro
- 1/2 c fresh basil
- 1. Prepare the marinade.

Place all marinade ingredients in a food processor or blender and process well.

2. Transfer marinade with the chicken, bell pepper and pineapple into a large Glad Zipper Bag. Marinate for at least 2 hours, up to overnight.

3. Put desiccated coconut in a frying pan over medium-high

heat. Stir constantly until the coconut is toasted or until its color turns a light golden brown. Set aside.

4. Cut eight 12-inch pieces of Glad Cook 'n' Bake. Place one sheet of paper on top of the other. Pour about 1/3 cup of the chicken mixture onto the center of the paper. Wrap it up like a square package, folding the sides over the mixture, and then folding over both ends. Secure the packets with toothpicks. Turn seam-side down.

5. Place these packets on a baking pan and bake at 350°F for 30-35 minutes. When the packets have finished baking, take them out and place them on serving plates.

6. Cut parcels to open and sprinkle with fresh coriander, basil, and finally some of the toasted coconut. Serve immediately with hot steamed rice.

Overnight excursion package comes with wine

YATS IS OFFERING A SPECIAL overnight excursion package that includes accommodation at the Clearwater Country Club.

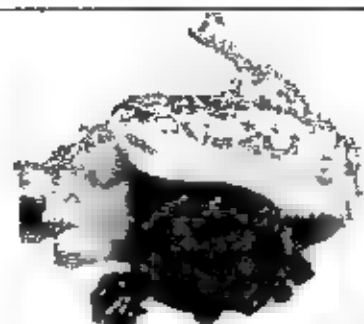
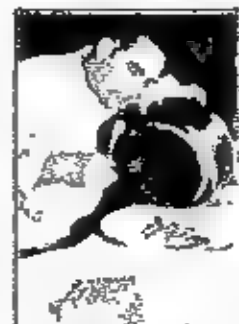
The P5,500 package, applicable Dec. 29-Jan. 1, includes one double-occupancy room, brunch for two and a special seven-course New Year set-

menu dinner at Yats Grill Room and Wine Cellars.

It also comes with a P300 gift voucher redeemable against purchase of wine at any Yats outlet during your stay plus a voucher for day-tour admission to Clearwater for two guests of yours.

The seven-course dinner comes with a complimentary bottle of red or white wine, or your choice of two bottles of beer.

The seven-course dinner includes a selection of freshly baked infused breads with salted butter; Niçoise Ratatouille; choice of Scotch Broth or Crème St. Germain soup; mixed salad, fresh tomatoes and parmesan with French-style vinaigrette; Gratinated Homemade Lasagne with Sweet Sour Capsicum Sauce; lemon sorbet; choice of Entrecôte Bordelaise (roast beef with cabernet sauvignon sauce) or Salmon Poache avec Sauce Vin Blanc (poached salmon steak with white wine and basil sauce) served with a choice of pommes noulangere, pommes au lard or luxury Australian rice, or Cheese Quiche with Gherkins and Alpha Alpha; choice of traditional Crème Caramel with Pineap-



OFFER includes brunch and a seven-course New Year set-menu dinner at Yats Grill Room and Wine Cellars.

ple Compote or Chocolate Bread & Butter Pudding with homemade caramel ice cream.

Package A, which is not applicable on Dec. 29-Jan. 1, includes one double-occupancy room, brunch for two and a special five-course winter set-menu dinner at Yats Grill Room and Wine Cellars. The price is P3,900, but it comes with a P300 gift voucher redeemable against purchase of wine at any Yats outlet during your stay.

Included in the five-course dinner are: selection of freshly baked infused breads with salted butter; Niçoise Ratatouille; choice of daily clear or lightly creamed soup of the day; mixed salad with fresh tomatoes, fresh parmesan and light grain mustard dressing, a choice of Pan-fried Fresh Fish Fillet, Seared Asparagus & Capers and Parsley Sauce or Pan Roasted Pork Loin Chop & Italian Sausage with Marsala Sauce; sautéed marble potatoes in roasted garlic and

shallots lightly buttered, with mixed seasonal vegetables; Chocolate Rum Cake with butter icing and fresh mango compote.

While in Clark, don't forget to visit the legendary Yats Wine Cellars which houses the famous P1-M wine, the vintage 1900 Château Margaux, along with 30,000 other bottles.

The Yats Club is at Mimosa Leisure Estate, just before you reach the casino some 50 meters past Holiday Inn

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Happy Holidays!

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scription of a future event or a timely report of an event that has just happened, it has a better chance than most of seeing print.

Date the release and indicate whether it is for immediate use or for a later date. Include your name and

phone number(s). To avoid duplication, indicate if you have sent the same material to more than one section of the INQUIRER. Photos must be of high resolution in JPEG format. Follow-up calls are not necessary. E-mail to lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

THE CONSUMER

Be careful when using the ATM

By Linda B. Bolido

WITH ANOTHER LONG BREAK coming up, long queues are forming once again in front of automated teller machines (ATM).

Of course, that also means many of these machines are running out of cash.

But a very alarming e-mail sent recently suggested that, if you did not get your money from the ATM, it might not be because it had no cash.

The message, however, was forwarded to somebody by somebody from somebody so we advise readers to take it with a grain of salt.

The message said somebody withdrew money from an ATM but did not get any cash. He checked his receipt and it showed that the money had been debited from his account.

The person thought it was just a machine error until he noticed a blue bar where the cash dispenser should be. He decided to look under the bar and found that it was closed, thus the money could not be released.

With a lot of effort, he removed it from the machine and was surprised to see the money he withdrew caught in the bar.

The person supposedly took photographs that were attached to his message.

I forwarded the e-mail to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas so it could verify if the account was accurate.

But whether true or not, there is only one lesson to be learned here. Always exercise care in handling your financial transactions.

Get your ATM receipt. If you do not get any cash, the receipt will give you the reason so it would be easier to explain to your bank.

It records the exact time and date of the transaction and the location of the ATM.

In this age of no-passbook banking, the ATM receipt is the only concrete record you have of your bank account, other than your regular statements. You can refer to it if you feel there is some discrepancy in your account.

The receipt tells you the amount of withdrawals and deposits and your available balance every time you use an ATM.

The person who claimed to have been almost robbed of his money also offered this advice:

"Carefully check the ATMs you use [to make sure there are no strange attachments] and, as much as possible, withdraw only during daytime, or at guard-

ed ATMs to avoid being scammed."

No goodwill here

If you use taxis a lot, like I do, you probably know that nobody runs the Christmas spirit as much as cab drivers.

No matter how determined you are to feel only goodwill toward other people, taxi drivers will weaken your resolve.

While they almost beg you to take a cab the rest of the year, during the holiday season they suddenly become picky, ferrying only people who are going where they want to go or who agree to pay the exorbitant amounts they charge.

They think it is Christmas so people should be more generous and should pay them more. What they seem to forget is that the season is about generosity. People give because they want to, not because they are forced to.

The way drivers operate during the holiday season is virtual extortion. You pay more or they don't take you.

Sometimes the "request" is couched in polite language "Bahala na po kayong magdagdag" but most of the time they just tell you how much they want.

Last week, I asked somebody to collect some packages from the office. I told him to take a taxi as the packages were large and heavy.

Not only was he charged double what I normally pay (the driver originally asked for P200 and settled for P120 for a distance that only costs P60) but also suggested in "jest" that he and my messenger just divide the Christmas gifts between the two of them.

I usually give more generously when the driver does not say anything about it being Christmas and all. But when he starts hunting, I become more stingy.

Clarification

My good friend Roseann Coscolluela-Vilegas wants to make it known she has not left her job and is happy where she is, thank you.

Roseann just found out she was inadvertently listed as marketing/advertising director of Imageworld Media Link Inc., publisher of Pinoy World magazine, a publication for overseas Filipinos.

Send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Magsaysay and Yague Sts., Makati City; or e-mail lbolido@inquirer.com.ph

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Editor Emmie G. Velarde

ENTERTAINMENT

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Christmas wish for the music industry

"THE INDUSTRY needs big business and concerned benefactors to pour in massive funds to create and support a program that will help discover, train and promote Filipino talent—from serious music geniuses to high priests of pop and rock and everything in between. Arnel Pineda and Charice Pempengco offer proof of Pinoy musical excellence. My wish is for us to put our minds together for a master plan: What to do with our vast pool of natural resources?"

Ryan Cayabyab, composer



DUNKIN' DONUTS Christmas Hologram Tumblers

Promo runs until December 31, 2007. See posters for details. © 2007 DD IP Holder LLC. All rights reserved.

Available in 6 designs

Buy a dozen Dunkin' Donuts and a hologram tumbler for P138

Per DTI-MCR Permit No. 4161, Series of 2007.



RJ PERFORMS in the New Year's Eve dinner show at Dusit Hotel, Makati.

By Pocholo Concepcion

RAMON JACINTO is a businessman—owner of radio stations, musical instruments stores and a bar-restaurant, among others. Now he's a public servant as well, having been recently appointed a director of Philcomsat and president of Philcomsat Holdings.

But it's a good guess that he's happiest being known as a music man. He's always glad to make time for a new gig, like his forthcoming New Year's Eve dinner show at the Dusit Hotel in Makati.

Tell us about the show.

It will be a dancing treat. The ballroom will have several dance floors. The intention is to bring in a sparkling New Year, so there will be overflowing champagne.

My repertoire will consist of five decades of dancing tunes, from the big band era to "La Vida Loca."

How do you prepare for a live performance?

I try not to talk too much in the office during the day. I have a business to run; I'm not like other performers who have the luxury of taking it easy on performance day.

I avoid drinks with ice and I take a 45-minute siesta. If I can fit it in, I exercise or play nine holes of golf late in the afternoon just to get my energy up.

You've been performing regularly on weekends for quite a while. Was it like this before you were exiled during martial law?

I was less active in the '60s. Since my arrival from exile in 1986, I have been playing regularly for intimate audiences, something I truly enjoy.

Speaking of the '60s, Wally Gonzalez of Juan de la Cruz says you were privileged because you had top-of-the line instruments, and had famous bands like The Ventures coming over to play with RJ and The Riots.

That was the perception, because we were the first to have a complete set of Fender guitars and amps that came out in 1961-'62. But even Wally had a Gibson, and many others had Fenders. RJ and The Riots was known as the Ventures of the Philippines. When the Ventures came here, Araneta Coliseum management got my drummer, Bernie Evangelista and bass player Alan Austria for back-up. The Ventures had Bob Bogle on lead guitar and Don Wilson on rhythm and they would sometimes travel without a drummer and bass player.

Of late, you've been playing with younger musicians like Nyoy Volante and Noel Cabangon. Do you exchange guitar-playing tips and other stuff?

We don't really exchange playing tips but we feed off one another's styles and enthusiasm. It's refreshing to perform with other musicians.

What's the best thing you have gained from being a musician?

Goodwill. When you perform, everybody is your friend.

'When you perform, everybody's a friend'

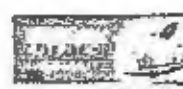
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GALLERIA

1 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO • THX 10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	6 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9 11:00 1:45 4:30 7:15 10:00
2 KATAS ng SAUDI 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	7 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL
3 RESIKLO 10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	8 ENTENG KABISOTE 4 12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:30
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4 10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	9 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO 12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:30
5 BAHAY KUBO 11:40 2:15 4:50 7:25 10:00	10 RESIKLO

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3. Kalangang may minimum of 5 official stamps sa Iyong card to qualify for submission to Grand Draw
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1 RESIKLO	6 BAHAY KUBO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	7 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	1 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 KATAS ng SAUDI	2 RESIKLO
5 RESIKLO	3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO

METRO EAST

1 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	5 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
2 BAHAY KUBO	6 KATAS ng SAUDI
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	7 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 RESIKLO	8 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

NOVALICHES

1 RESIKLO	5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
3 BAHAY KUBO	7 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 KATAS ng SAUDI	8 RESIKLO

PIONEER

1 RESIKLO	3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
2 BAHAY KUBO	4 KATAS ng SAUDI

STA. ROSA

1 RESIKLO	1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
5 BAHAY KUBO	5 BAHAY KUBO

DASMARINAS

1 RESIKLO	1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	3 BAHAY KUBO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	4 KATAS ng SAUDI
5 BAHAY KUBO	5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

ANGELES

1 RESIKLO	1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	

TARLAC

1 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	4 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
2 BAHAY KUBO	5 RESIKLO
3 KATAS ng SAUDI	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

BACOLOD

1 RESIKLO	1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	3 BAHAY KUBO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	4 KATAS ng SAUDI
5 BAHAY KUBO	5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
6 KATAS ng SAUDI	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

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OFFICIAL ENTRY

Ariel Ureta, Donato Pineda, and Juliana Palomera

Derek Ramayo

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An official entry to the 33rd Metro Manila Film Festival-Philippines

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TIME

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7 p.m., 8 p.m., 9 p.m. and 10 p.m. at the Fuente Circle. Call 687-6770.

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New Year's Eve at the Hyatt Hotel Manila stars the Philippine Opera

Company, a group of classically trained talents such as The Three Waiters, Three Tenors and Opera Belles on Dec. 31 at The Ballroom, 6th floor. Ploy Quintos writes and directs the show. Call 245-1234.

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RESIKLO	ENTENG KABISOTE 4	SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO
KATAS NG SAUDI	BAHAY KUBO	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 9

MOVIES & SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

SHANG CINEPLEX

1 BAHAY KUBO	3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO
2 KATAS NG SAUDI	4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

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Shangri-La Plaza (Mandaluyong)
Tel. 633-2227/633-7851 loc. 173

1 BAHAY KUBO
2 KATAS NG SAUDI
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
5 PREMIERE RESERVED

Blue Wave
Blue Wave (Mandaluyong)
Tel. 594-1527

1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9
2 BAHAY KUBO
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
4 RESIKLO

CINEWORLD
(Isatann Racio) Tel. 733-4228

1 BAHAY KUBO
2 KATAS NG SAUDI
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
5 RESIKLO

Small
Tel. 726-6150

1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9
2 RESIKLO

KARIN
Tel. 533-3851, 533-3859

1 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9
4 KATAS NG SAUDI

Cinemagic Pacific Mall
(Lucena) Tel. 250-8263

1 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) Tel. (043) 981-0790

1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO
4 RESIKLO

Center Mall Cinema
(Baguio) Tel. (074) 444-3945

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Batangas) Tel. (047) 237-7007

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9

Jade Cinema
(Angeles) Tel. (045) 887-5001

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
2 RESIKLO
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO
4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) Tel. 850-1276

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
2 RESIKLO
3 KATAS NG SAUDI
4 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO

metropolis
(Alabang) Tel. 850-4285

1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9
2 BAHAY KUBO
3 KATAS NG SAUDI
4 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO

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1 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
11:00, 1:30, 4:00 6:30, 9:00 PG-13	10:30, 12:50, 3:10 5:30, 7:50, 10:10 GP

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3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9	4 BAHAY KUBO	5 RESIKLO
11:20, 2:10, 5:00 7:50, 10:35 GP	11:40, 2:25, 5:10 7:55, 10:35 GP	10:30, 12:50, 3:10 5:30, 7:50, 10:10 GP

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December 28, 2007
January 24, 2008
February 8-9, 15-16, 2008
February 11, 2008

Probi	Dancing with the Champions 2	8:00 PM
Siti, Roy, Valerie	Kyla, Shamrock, Cuzco & Muffy	8:00 PM

TEATRO
December 28 & 29, 2007
Drag, Ona

10:00 PM

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SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9
2:00, 4:50, 7:40, 10:30
G
SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO
2:35, 5:05, 7:35, 10:30
PG-13
ENTENG KABISOTE
12:55, 3:20, 5:45, 8:10, 10:30
PG-13
RESIKLO
12:50, 3:20, 5:50, 8:20, 10:50
R-13

JOHN PAUL BENITA KATRINA ROXANNE
LOVE MATTHEW MELISSA MARTINE JEWEL FELIX
NASH SAM EUGENE BOOTS
AND DENNIS RILLO

SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 9

Directed by MIKE TUVIERA TOPEL LEE PAUL DAZA

CAST: GINA ALARIN TONTONG THERESA JOHN MARK JOJO ALFAR
SOPHIA MARIE BARRAS HECTOR MAFANO JAYME MAFANO JAYSON GUNZA ANDREA TORRES

AN OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE 2007 METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL-PHILIPPINES

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Fun Snaps from 2007

STARTING today, we'll look back on the year just past via snapshots of some of our favorite celebrity interview subjects.

Maricel Soriano Eric Quizon
Marian Rivera Shaina Magdayao Yasmien Kaur Eugene Domingo and Ms. Gloria Romero
Mark Herras Rayver Cruz Jiro Manjo Bearwin Melly

Bahay Kubo

A Pinoy Mano Po!

A Film by Joel C. Lamangan, dp/pt

Also Starring: Isabella del León, Sam Burnatay, Rita Iningan

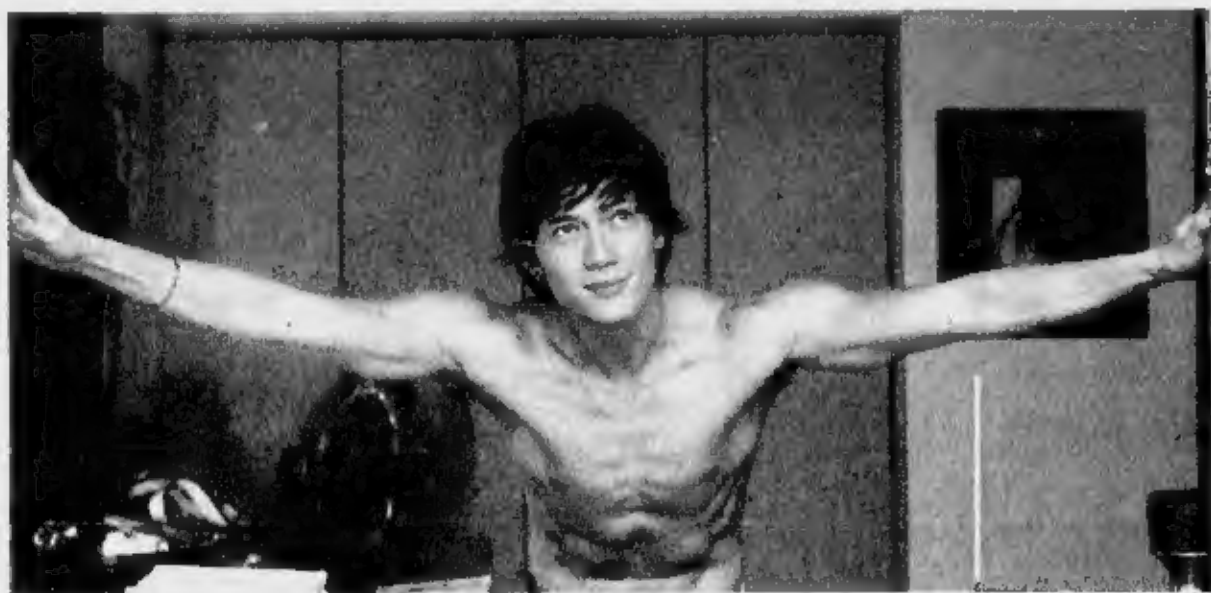
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NOW SHOWING! GP

MALL TOUR: DEC-29 REGAL EXTRAVAGANZA; GLORIETTA ACTIVITY CENTER, 5PM



RUSTON PADILLA at sunrise—"The light is great," he says—in his Makati condo in October, opening up to newness a few months after he outed himself on nationwide TV. JIM GUJAG PUNZALAN



WEARING red rubber slippers, Boy Camara, Pinoy rock icon of the 1960s, shows us some graceful *tal chi* moves during an interview in July. AUGUST DE LA CRUZ

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Gateway Cinemas 10
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SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL	BAHAY KUBO	KATAS NG SAUDI
12:50 3:40 6:30 9:20	12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 9:55	12:30 2:50 6:10 7:30 9:50

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SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKOLO	ENTENG KABISOTE 4	RESIKLO
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GLORIETTA 1	1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9	2 BAHAY KUBO	3 KATAS NG SAUDI	4 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO
GLORIETTA 4	1 RESIKLO	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO	4 KATAS NG SAUDI
GREENBELT 1	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	2 RESIKLO		
GREENBELT 3	1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9	2 BAHAY KUBO		
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 KATAS NG SAUDI	2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO	3 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	4 RESIKLO
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 BAHAY KUBO	2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO	3 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	4 RESIKLO
MARKET! MARKET!	1 BAHAY KUBO	2 KATAS NG SAUDI	3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO	4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
TRINOMA	1 RESIKLO	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKOLO	4 KATAS NG SAUDI
	5 BAHAY KUBO	6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9	7 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	

AT THE MALLS

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Glorietta - 752 7272
Greenbelt - 757 4853 to 54
Alabang Town Center - 842 2782; 772 1850
Ayala Center Cebu - (832) 231 5342 loc. 324
Market! Market! - 886 7519
Trinoma - 901 3000

Ayala

glorietta	Taylor Hicks Live! December 18; 7pm; Glorietta 4 Park
GREENBELT	Taylor Hicks Live! December 19; 7pm; Greenbelt 3 Park
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	Christian Bautista Live! December 22; 8pm; Town Plaza
AYALA CENTER CEBU	Christmas Chorus featuring Akafellas December 22; 7pm; Activity Center
MARKET! MARKET!	Japan Foundation Karate Demonstration December 18; 6pm; Activity Center
Onstage	Repertory Philippines presents TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE January 11 to 27, 2007 For inquiries, pls. call 887-0710 or visit www.repertory-philippines.com
Ayala MUSEUM	WATER: THE MEDIUM by Juvenal Sanso November 24 to January 13, 2008; Ground Floor Gallery For more info, pls. call 757-7117 to 21 loc. 14 or email museum_inquiry@ayalamuseum.org
Tri Noma	Taylor Hicks Live! December 20; 7pm; Activity Center FREE Christmas Gift Bag for every P500 worth of purchase. See leaflets for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A3-938, Series of 2007 December 1 to 31

AYALA MALLS CINEMAS and REGAL ENTERTAINMENT present

REGAL Extravaganza 2007

MEET & GREET the stars of

SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 9

DESPERADAS

all day until 11pm... and over those years you know!

Bahay Kubo DECEMBER 29, 2007 • 6:00 pm
Glorietta Activity Center

Reserved seats for the first 200 moviegoers who will present their SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9, DESPERADAS, and BAHAY KUBO movie tickets purchased in any Ayala Malls Cinemas on December 29, 2007.

Teens & Kids Zone

Now Open
3rd Level, Glorietta 3

KIDS
Baby Couture Diaper
Babyland
Basics for Kids
Beagle House
Big & Small
Chicco
Cuts for Tots
Enfant
Gift Gate
Gingersnaps
Kandy & Karen
Kids of Bayo
Maxi Bear
Meet My Feet

Orange Juice
OshKosh 8'Gosh
Papamelrofi
Pink Box
Spin
Think Pink
Toytown

TEENS
Adidas
All Boxed Up
American Boulevard
Astrovision
Bayo
Blued

Blue Star
Buffalo
Converse
DM Store
Folded & Hung
Francesco
Hang Ten
Kamiset
Lee
Nike Stadium
Petit Monde
Plains & Prints
Replay
Soda
Fern

Studio AK
Tomato
Whoops
X
YRYS

SPECIALTY
Ang Gara
Bead Shop
Candy Corner
Cindy Carol
Color Stone
Courtside
Cubes
Filbars

Gift Factory
Girl Stuff
Island Life
i2i
Mallos
MCKY
Must Have
Scrap It
Spoofs
Swell Stuff
Unisilver
Vente
Whimsy

glorietta

GREENBELT

ALABANG TOWN

AYALA CENTER CEBU

MARKET!

Tri Noma